

The Silence of Inaction

- *A qualitative study of the impact that Nansen dialogue seminars have had on ethnic relations in Stolac*

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Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to investigate if the dialogue seminars organised by the Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) in Mostar have had a perceptible impact on ethnic relations locally in Stolac, at the level of practices and/or representations - and if so, in which ways. The main method used for generating empirical data was qualitative analysis of interviews with four teachers who work at the ethnically segregated Stolac High School.

The empirical data from the interviews with the teachers were compared with data from interviews with two participants from Srebrenica. The findings indicate that the dialogue seminars have created a limited sphere for inter-ethnic interaction for the teachers in Stolac. In the seminars they were able to share common goals and needs, and work on joint problems regarding Stolac High School. However, the seminars do not seem to have had a significant impact at the level of practices. There is a relative absence of newly initiated inter-ethnic social relationships involving the participants from Stolac taking part in the dialogue seminars. The teachers have not had much further contact with one another without help from the NDC, even though they all argue that this contact is highly appreciated and needed. Some interpretations for the teachers' apparent reluctance to initiate contact with "the other" participants are addressed in this thesis.

The analysis of the empirical material suggest that if social and political structures in the participants' society do not support and provide inter-ethnic communication and contact, dialogue projects may have little practical impact on participants' ethnic relations. However, there is evidence to suggest that the dialogue seminars do have a potential for fertilising the grounds for reconciliation. Since dialogue seminars have had a perceptible impact on ethnic relations among the participants from Srebrenica, it is possible that the dialogue seminars organised by the NDC Mostar will have a

greater impact on ethnic relations in Stolac once the teachers have progressed further through the dialogue process.

“Youth division and youth vision”



This picture is taken on the midpoint of a bridge in the ethnically segregated town Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The bridge connects the Croat and the Bosniak parts of the town, which are separated by a river.

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Waterfall in Stolac

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1. Introduction

1.1 War and reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina

As recently as 20 years ago, the people of the Yugoslav Federation, including Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter BiH), lived together happily in multi-ethnic communities. The demography of BiH, however, changed dramatically as a direct result of the war¹ (1992-1995). The pre-war population of 4, 5 million had been reduced to 2, 9 million in 1996 (Bringa, 2005: 187). The war also left its marks on the multi-ethnic makeup on the country. Before the war Croats (Catholics), Bosniaks (Muslims) and Serbs (Greek-Orthodox) were living in the same areas. After, people from the three ethnic categories flocked together in more “ethnically clean” regions. Cultural traits that were associated with people’s ethnic identity was suddenly remembered and in the end these traits were used to justify that it was impossible for the ethnic categories to continue living side by side (Eriksen, 2002:12).

Today most communities in BiH are still physically or socially segregated according to ethnic identity. Hostility between people with different ethnic identities is not uncommon. Moreover, the economy is at a low level, which together with the high unemployment rate aggravates things further (ORI, 2008, section 2:14; Thorpe, 2001). When a municipality is segregated and different categories of people do not co-operate, it becomes difficult to solve problems regarding everyday issues like infrastructure and unemployment. Therefore, there is a need for the pre-war network of social relationships to be re-established in these societies (Corkalo et al., 2004: 158). Unless the conditions and foundations for a stable and lasting peace are

¹ There is a debate about whether one should say “war” or “wars”, because there were several overlapping and interlinked conflicts between 1992-1995 (Bieber, 2006: 26). In this thesis the conflicts will be referred to as “the war”.

implemented in the aftermath of a civil conflict, it is possible that there could be a recurrence of violence (Paris, 2004:2-3).

Stolac, a small town in BiH, is ethnically segregated at most levels of society. Even the Stolac High School is split into one Croat and one Bosniak part. One of the problems with keeping schools segregated after a conflict is that children are easily manipulated, and education can therefore be used to perpetuate inequalities and to justify past violence. In the worst-case scenario, education can be an instrument to mobilise a future generation for war. However, education also carries the potential for promoting peace and respect for others (Freedman et al., 2004: 226). The gap between the ethnically separated communities may be bridged when students of different ethnic and religious background come together, and when they are taught by teachers with different ethnic affiliations. Through learning about “the other” and confronting stereotypes, tolerance can be improved. Research has shown that common goals and co-operation in the classrooms can lead to cross-ethnic friendships and changed attitudes (Afzali & Colleton, 2003: 7-8, 16). However, co-operation and interaction between students and teachers with different ethnic affiliations is not easily established in ethnically segregated schools. Therefore, these schools sometimes need help from others in finding ways for ethnic interaction and co-operation to take place.

Dialogue is one reconciliation method, which aims to replace hostile attitudes and bring people together. In BiH three Nansen Dialogue Centres are currently co-operating with the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer in organising dialogue projects. The intention with these projects is the bringing of people from ethnically segregated municipalities together in an attempt to improve inter-ethnic interaction and co-operation. The ultimate goal is to reconcile the ethnic categories in BiH and thereby make municipalities in the country less segregated. One of the projects involves teachers from both sides of Stolac High School (Røhr, 2005a: 2-4).

1.2 Research questions

The original aim of this thesis was to investigate what impact the dialogue seminars arranged by the NDCs may have on participants regarding practices and attitudes towards others with a different ethnic identity, and also, if the possible impact of the dialogue seminars stretches beyond those participating. The research question was defined as follows:

Have the dialogue seminars organised by the Nansen Dialogue Centres (NDCs) had any perceptible impact on ethnic relations locally, at the level of practices and/or representations - and if so, in which ways?

This research question was explored through qualitative interviews with a group of participants from Stolac, and two participants from Srebrenica, who have taken part in dialogue seminars². However, the analysis of the empirical material from interviews with the participants from Stolac generated a further question that could not be left unanswered. It became apparent that these participants appreciated interacting and co-operating with “the other”. They wanted more opportunities to meet; however, they did not seem to arrange for further contact with the other participants without help from the NDC. Therefore, inspired by these findings an additional research question was added.

How can we explain the relative absence of newly initiated inter-ethnic social relationships involving the participants from Stolac taking part in the NDC Mostar dialogue seminars?

The intention with the second research question is to shed light on why the dialogue seminars seem to have little or no effect on the participants from Stolac’s relations and behaviour towards “the other”. Since the main focus in this thesis will be on how the dialogue seminars have affected ethnic relations in Stolac, answers to the research

² For a further explanation of how the research study was conducted see chapter 2.

questions will mostly be generated from the analysis of empirical material from the teachers in Stolac. This empirical data will be compared and seen in relation to relevant documents, and other available empirical data.

1.3 The value of this thesis

Since the 1970s, an enormous amount of anthropological research on ethnicity and nationalism has been done, but surprisingly few studies have dealt with violent conflicts and conflict resolution (Eriksen, 2001:47). Since dialogue is a method used in reconciliation, this thesis is directly related to the field of conflict resolution.

Strong ethnic segregation may, in worst-case scenario, lay the future ground for hostile attitudes, or even worse, violent conflicts (Paris, 2004:2-5). Therefore, learning about different reconciliation methods and how they work (or fail) to unite people is crucial to secure the foundations for peaceful societies in post-war areas. This goal of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the impact dialogue seminars may have in fertilising the grounds for peace building and reconciliation.

In order to understand the impact reconciliation measures may have on individuals, and ethnic relations, it is necessary to get an understanding of how people can be influenced by the wider social context they interact in. If the context somehow weakens the effect reconciliation projects have on participants, it is crucial to recognise how, and why, these structures affect them, in order to get a better understanding of how one may improve the fundamental foundations for reconciliation. A large part of the analysis in this thesis is therefore devoted to how the social and political context may (or may not) constrain or affect the participants' behaviour towards "the other".

This thesis is to be understood as an explorative study. It is not intended for theory building. However, since it focuses on social relations and human behaviour, which are apparent in many post civil-conflicts, it may be possible to "transfer" the findings

in this thesis to settings beyond the time and place of where the research was conducted (Stewart, 1998: 47).

1.4 Review of related literature

Vemund Aarbakke (2002) has conducted a research study for PRIO (International Peace Research Institute, Oslo) where he addresses the effects dialogue seminars organised by the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer have had on participants. The subjects in his study had different educational backgrounds, and the age difference between them varied. Many of the informants in Aarbakke's report were former participants to the Nansen Dialogue Project (NDP), who later started working for various NDCs in the Balkans. However, he did also conduct some interviews with people who did not work for the Nansen Dialogue Network (NDN). It is possible that the people who were affiliated with the NDN may (or may not) have been biased in their answers (Aarbakke, 2007 [email to author]).

Aarbakke found that in some cases the participants experienced that that the prejudices they had towards "the other" broke down through socialising with them in Lillehammer. Some participants also realised that the media at home had given a biased picture of "the others", and they discovered that the enemy images they had were sometimes based on inaccurate facts. Even though many of the participants became friends when they were in Lillehammer, most of them found it difficult to return to their local communities with their new gained perspectives. It was challenging for them to maintain and promote moderate attitudes in societies characterised by segregation, and hostility between ethnic categories.

My thesis differs from Aarbakke's research study. First of all, the majority of my informants are participants who do not work within the NDN. Secondly, while Aarbakke bases his research mainly on his interview data, the empirical data in this thesis is analysed through investigating the wider social and political contexts' influence on the participants' ethnic relations (Aarbakke, 2002).

In her master's thesis Solveig Høegh-Krohn (2005) investigates the effect the NDP has had on interpersonal reconciliation and changes in inter-group attitudes among participants from the former Yugoslavia. She concludes that the structure of the seminars do contribute to de-categorisation, re-categorisation, and the reduction of hostile attitudes. However, she also argues that the participants tend not to generalise their experiences and inter-group attitude changes from the seminars to the whole original out-group.

This thesis has a different approach to the dialogue projects than the approach found in Høegh-Krohn's thesis. First of all, the area of focus in this thesis (BiH) is significantly smaller than Høegh-Krohn's (the former Yugoslavia) (Høegh-Krohn, 2005: 78-81). Secondly, she focuses mainly on the changes and mechanism that are active *during* the dialogue seminars. Therefore, she does not pay much attention to social and political structures in the participants' societies. As mentioned previously, this thesis does provide an exploration of how social and political structures may affect social relations and the participants' behaviours towards "the other". Macro-level processes, like state politics (for example in relation to the implementation of nationalism, or the allocation of rights) influence processes at the median-level (which includes processes that create collectives like in-groups and out-groups). Furthermore, median- and macro-level processes influence interpersonal interactions and expressions of identity at the micro-level. Therefore, macro-and median-level processes cannot be ignored when one is trying to explain individual behaviour (Barth 1994b: 21-22; Barth, 1994c: 184).

Since both Aarbakke and Høegh-Krohn have provided analyses on how dialogue seminars may affect people's hostile attitudes towards "the other", my discussion of this topic will be less comprehensive. Instead, as already mentioned, the focus will be mainly on the dialogue seminars' impact on local ethnic relations and on the participants' behaviour towards "the others".

1.5 Positioning of core concepts

The concepts presented in this section will serve as background information, with the intention that readers not familiar with the topics mentioned will be able to grasp the theoretical basis for this thesis. First, there will be given an introduction to the history of peace building and reconciliation. Then it will be explained why these reconciliation measures are sometimes implemented in a post conflict situation. An introduction to how dialogue can be used as a method for reconciliation will also be given. Thereafter, a short explanation of this thesis' approach to ethnic identity, and ethnogenesis (the creation of ethnic identity) is provided. It is crucial for the reader to be introduced to the latter topics, because most of the choices made regarding this thesis, from selecting a research question to analysing the interviews, is in different ways affected by the way the author understand ethnic identity and identity formation.

Peace building and reconciliation

Peace building

After a conflict the first step towards a peace process is the signing of a peace agreement. Unfortunately, a conflict rarely reaches its end once such a contract is signed. Most often it is important to implement some peace building or reconciliation measures, in an attempt to keep the new peace settlements stable (Maoz, 2000). Peace agreements, ceasefires and reconciliation are therefore closely linked.

Post conflict peace building became increasingly popular in international politics in the 1990s. The aim, according to Kofi Annan, was “*to create the conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies*” (Annan, 1999, para 101).

The idea originated from the twenty-eighth president of the US, Woodrow Wilson, who believed that the only way to establish a durable peace in Europe was to impose democracies and liberalism, since well-established market democracies tend to be

peaceful in their internal affairs and they are less likely to fight other democracies³ (Paris, 2004: 185). This theory, referred to as “the Democratic Peace Theory”, influenced most of the peace building operations in the 1990s. What characterised most of these operations were promotions of civil and political rights, and heavy emphasis on democratisation and marketisation. However, those who followed the Democratic Peace Theory usually only focused on the likelihood of a state experiencing civil conflict once the country had become democratic. They sometimes failed to recognise the fact that a state, which is undergoing a democratisation process, is usually more violent in the early stages of the transformation than it was previously (Paris, 2004:44-45). Peacemakers inspired by the Democratic Peace Theory also had a tendency to impose democratic elections in countries that were not institutionally ready to handle democratic processes. The lack of attention to implementing peace-building measures before having elections sometimes escalated the problems in the countries instead of improving them (Paris, 2004: 99-103). Roland Paris (2004) has argued that implementing democracy will not automatically lead to peace. Therefore it is important that peace-building missions remain in countries for a long period of time. Peace builders should aim to improve the foundations for peace in post-war areas by promoting democratic values, improving and developing functional institutions, and preventing hostility and the renewed outbreak of violence (Paris, 2004:207). Today there are many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that see the importance of peace building for maintaining a sustainable peace. However, these days not all of them are inspired by the Democratic Peace Theory. Since the organisations are so different regarding activities and ideologies, it is difficult to make any generalisation of them (Paris, 2004:1-7, 19, 32).

³ For a critique, and further explanation of this theory see: Paris 2004.

Reconciliation

As mentioned above Paris (2004) has argued that it is necessary to prevent hostility if one wants to improve the foundations for peace in post-war areas. In order to achieve this it is necessary that the categories of people who are hostile towards one another are reconciled (Paris, 2004: 207). The concept “reconciliation” can be interpreted in many different ways. In some societies, reconciliation is understood merely as the absence of violent conflict. In other societies, social healing and a restoration of social relationships are considered to be necessary criteria for reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation commission are sometimes seen as crucial to this process (Skaar et al., 2005:4-6). In this thesis “*reconciliation*” is understood as: “*a political and social process aimed at promoting peaceful relations, as well as normalised, co-operative political and cultural relations*” (Kaufman, 2006). The main focus in this thesis is on reconciliation at the “grass root level”, and on the *interpersonal level* in particular. When reconciliation is implemented at the “grass root level”, as are dialogue seminars, the aim is to make people in local societies capable of living together and building a common future (Sommerfeldt, 2005: 138-139). The purpose is that they will listen to each other and discuss certain problems, and thus, get an opportunity to build lasting, co-operative inter-ethnic relationships (Kaufman, 2001:42-44). This thesis addresses dialogue seminars’ potential for reconciliation as it looks at how the participants in Stolac come to terms with people with a different ethnic identity after they have attended dialogue seminars (Gloppen, 2005b: 20).

Social identities and ethnicity

Identity

“Without repertoires of identification we would not be able to relate to each other meaningfully or consistently. We would not have that vital sense of who’s who and what’s what. Without identity there could be no human world” (Jenkins, 2004: 7).

The human brain is constantly subject to an overwhelming number of impressions. In order to make sense of the world, impressions, including people and objects, are grouped together and categorised into more comprehensible units. In other words,

identities can be seen as categories that help create order in people's social life. By placing oneself and others into categories it becomes easier to navigate in social landscapes. The number of identities a person has is great, and it varies according to social settings and contexts. The social situation he or she is in decides which identity that is made relevant when in the interaction with others. In a sense every identity is exclusive because there are restrictions to which identities a person can claim (Eriksen, 2002: 59, 76).

This thesis' approach to ethnic identity

Ethnicity is one kind of social relationship, involving a particular aspect of a person. Relationships can, naturally, be based on other criteria. Common traits of ethnic groups are that they tend to have myths of common origin and they nearly always have ideologies encouraging endogamy. Previously, it was not uncommon to view ethnicity from a primordial perspective. According to this view of ethnicity, every individual shares an identity with others from the moment of birth. Following this view then, ethnicity is a basic inherent group identity expressed through central markers like race, religion and language (Eriksen, 2002: 59, 76; Kaufman, 2001:23). Today the instrumentalist approach towards ethnic identity has more support among academic scholars. According to this approach ethnicity is dynamic and subject to manipulation. In this thesis the understanding of ethnicity is based on one of Eriksen's definition where "*ethnicity*" is defined as, "*an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction*" (Eriksen, 2002:12).

Ethnic identity can be formed through self-prescription. This occurs when some people choose specific traits based on history, ownership, dress codes, food habits, religion etc, to represent and symbolise a membership in a particular group or category (Barth, 1994a: 13- 16; Eriksen, 2002: 10-12). Others' recognition of an identity is an important part of identity formation, and identity can be formed through categorisation or ascription by others. Sometimes others can actively constitute a

persons' ethnic identity by the way they treat or respond to the individual (Jenkins, 2004: 22, 73).

According to Fredrik Barth (1994a) ethnic identity is not something you can see physically on people. It becomes apparent in social interaction. When ethnicity is made relevant in a social encounter, a communication of cultural similarities and differences take place between individuals who view themselves as different from each other. Thus, since ethnicity is an aspect of a relation that becomes apparent in social interaction, it is neither the property of a group, nor is it static. Instead it exists in the boundaries, or in the communication that take place between individuals with different group memberships (Barth, 1994a: 13- 16).

1.5.2 The importance of ethnic identity in Stolac

In Stolac there is a small majority of Bosniaks, followed by Croats, and a few Serb families. As the population of Serbs in Stolac is small, this thesis will only focus on the other two ethnic categories.

Previously it was mentioned that ethnic identity is an aspect of social interaction, and the identity is *made* relevant in the interaction. Since ethnic identity is an aspect of a social relationship, it is dynamic and it can have greater or lesser importance according to the relevance people decide that ethnic identity should have. As will be explained later in the analysis chapter, ethnic identity was not an important aspect of most social interactions in Stolac until the war broke out (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]; Olja, 2008 [interview with author]). However, it seems that the threshold for *making* ethnicity one of the most relevant criteria for organisation of social interaction has become low in Stolac after the war. Ethnic identity is made visible and relevant in most social encounters. The ethnic categories in Stolac have become separated at almost all levels of society. In order to understand why the importance put on ethnic identity changed so drastically during, and after the war, it is necessary to take a look at the recent history of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the influence it has had

on ethnic relations in Stolac. The historical context of BiH will be attended to in the chapter three.

In an attempt to provide an overlook at how this thesis is structured a summary of the main elements addressed in each chapter will be given in the next section

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has six chapters. The second chapter will give an account of the methodology and the method that was used in this thesis. The focus here is on how the empirical data was created, and on the theoretical approach that was used for the analysis. A short description of ethical concerns regarding this thesis will also be mentioned.

In chapter three the historical background of BiH is presented. History is an important part of the social context in this country. Previously, historical events have been manipulated to express how ethnic categories are different from each other, and why they should be kept apart (Bringa, 2004:178-186). The history chapter therefore reflects some of the macro-level processes that are contemporary affecting individuals in Stolac at the micro-level. The main aim of this chapter is twofold. First of all the intention is to provide the reader with an understanding of how it was possible for a town like Stolac to be affected by macro-level processes and eventually break into war. A second intention is to show how contemporarily ethnic relations in Stolac are influenced by the violent past.

In the fourth chapter I explain what the Nansen Dialogue Network is, and a short account of the history behind the establishment of the NDN, and the ideological foundations for this network's establishment will be provided. The aim of this chapter is to give the reader a better foundation for understanding what the Nansen dialogue seminars are, how they work, and what the intentions behind them are.

The analysis is presented in chapter five. In the first part of the analysis the possible effects the Nansen dialogue seminars have had on the participants are introduced. A comparison of the participants from Stolac and the participants from Srebrenica will be provided in an attempt to see if these two groups differ regarding the dialogue seminars' impact on the participants' ethnic relations. The second part of the analysis will focus on why the teachers from Stolac do not initiate contact with one another without help from the NDC. Here the social and political context of Stolac and BiH will be analysed in an attempt to find possible answers to this inaction.

The final chapter provides a summary of the findings from the analysis chapter.

2. Methodology

2.1 Generating knowledge through interpretation

“The notion that unless a cultural phenomenon is empirically universal, it cannot reflect anything about the nature of man, is about as logical as the notion that because sickle-cell anemia is, fortunately, not universal, it cannot tell us anything about human genetic processes” (Geertz, 1973: 44).

Truth claims and views of the nature of knowledge vary between, but also within, academic disciplines. Some argue that social researchers should generate testable theories, and they should aim to control variables (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1996:33-36; Kalleberg, 1996: 14). However, not all social scientists using qualitative methods are interested in finding neutral, objective, generalisable laws about the human realm. Rather some researchers aim to explore and gain more knowledge about specific complex phenomena like how social contexts affect human behaviour and social interaction (Polkinghorne, 1989:13-14). Social anthropology is one discipline that has a special approach towards the human realm. Originally this discipline devoted its focus on local life, the way it was experienced by the locals themselves. The insights the anthropologists gained were used as empirical basis for comparison and theory building. The main goal for anthropologists today is still to uncover the meaning particular social actions have for individuals. They also want to explore what these actions demonstrate about the society in which they are found, and social life in general. Their task then, is to go beyond what the eye observes and try to understand the meaning of human behaviour, and thus interpret it through a “thick description”. It is impossible to make a “thick description” without giving the chosen reality shape. Therefore the production of anthropological texts can be seen as a creational affair. The interpretation by the anthropologist is constructed descriptions of what he or she believes that “(...) *the informants are up to, or think they are up to*” (Geertz, 1973: 15). The anthropologist should systemise, and try to make sense of

these descriptions. Anthropology can therefore be seen as an intellectual effort, which aims to interpret and place cultural events into hierarchies of meaningful structures. The essential task of theory building in the field of social anthropology is therefore not to codify abstract regularities, and to find out if certain phenomena are empirically common, but to make thick description possible, and not to generalise across cases, but to generalise within them (Eriksen, 2003: 52; Geertz, 1973:4-10, 15, 26-27).

2.2 Theoretical and methodological approach

The theoretical and methodological basis for this thesis is inspired by the multi disciplinary approach I have gained through attending the master's program in Peace and Conflict Studies. Various theories usually associated with the fields of social anthropology, sociology and social psychology are used. However, social anthropology is the field that inspires the approach in this thesis the most, and the interpretive approach is used in the analysis of the empirical material. I have tried to pay respect to Geertz concept of "thick description", by placing the empirical data in its wider social and political context when attempting to find answers to what impact the dialogue seminars may have on local ethnic relations (Geertz, 1973: 6). In spite of the significant influence social anthropological theories have on this thesis, it is still not to be considered an anthropological master's thesis due to its multi-disciplinary character and its interview generated empirical material.

2.3 Choosing a method

The choice of methods for this thesis were inspired by, and connected to the research questions. The detailed on-the-ground research, which is the hallmark of anthropology, is the best method for investigating the personal significance that ethnic membership can have to people (Eriksen, 2002:2). The ethnographic fieldwork would have been an ideal method for gathering the empirical data. Unfortunately, due

to the structure of the Peace and Conflict program, students are not given significant time to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. However, even though fieldwork was not an available option for generating data for this thesis, I did not want to feel alienated from the country and the people I was to write about. My assumption was that books and articles could only teach you so much when it comes to human relations, interaction and culture. In order to understand the world, “firsthand” participation, instead of just observing people at a distance, is necessary (Silverman, 2006: 68). Therefore, I decided to travel to BiH in January 2008 for three weeks in order to gather empirical data through conducting qualitative interviews. The three weeks spent in the field did provide a satisfying amount of empirical data in relation to the scope of this thesis. As Ellen (1984) says, the length of time spent living in a community does not by itself contribute to theory. Instead the time spent in the field varies according to each problem and each situation (Ellen, 1984: 227-229). Van Maanen (1988) argues that less time in the field is necessary if the research topic is well defined to a particular cultural problem (Van Maanen, 1988: 78).

2.4 Preparations for the research study

In November 2007 I visited the Nansen Academy, where I had the opportunity meet Steinar Bryn, who is the project administrator for dialogue and peace building at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, and the senior advisor for the NDN. Bryn provided information about dialogue projects in BiH. I was also given the opportunity to observe a dialogue seminar that was taking place at the time. This seminar consisted of participants affiliated with the NDC in Banja Luka⁴. The observation gave me insights to how dialogue seminars are practiced. Seeing how dialogue seminars actually work left a big impression on me. It was an emotional experience hearing and seeing the participants with different ethnic affiliations discuss matters concerning the war, violence and prejudices in the seminar. Later I

⁴ Banja Luka is a town in the Serb Republic in BiH.

had a telephone conversation with Heidrun Sørle Røhr, who works with education and dialogue at the Nansen Academy. We discussed my interview guide⁵, and how to get in contact with participants in BiH. Through Bryn and Røhr I got in contact with Elvir Djuliman, who works with dialogue projects at the NDC Mostar, and Mustafa Cero, the operational manager at the NDC Sarajevo.

As already mentioned the main aim of my research study was to find out if dialogue seminars organised by the NDCs could have a perceptible impact on ethnic relations locally, at the level of practices and/or representations. With this in mind I decided to conduct interviews with two groups who had been participating in the NDP, one group from Stolac and one from Srebrenica. The participants from Srebrenica had been enrolled in the NDP longer than the participants from Stolac; therefore I was interested in comparing the groups to see if there were any differences in their levels of progress.

2.5 The interviews

The flight to Sarajevo was booked in November. Unfortunately, the timing of the arrival did not turn out to be successful in relation to getting in contact with participants. Most workers in BiH are on holiday leave until the end of January. Due to the lack of access, fewer interviews than originally planned were conducted. It could have been beneficial to spend more time with each informant because this could have provided a better chance to get “backstage”⁶ information. However, in spite of the limited access to informants, the empirical data turned out to be satisfying in relation to the scope of the research questions. Thus, the empirical material serves as a comprehensive foundation for the analysis.

⁵ The interview guide is available upon request.

⁶ This concept will be explained later in this chapter.

Four participants from a group of 12 teachers from Stolac, who are currently involved with a dialogue project organised by the NDC Mostar, were interviewed. Two of these interviews were conducted in Stolac. The first was with a young, female Croat teacher, Olja. This interview took place in a café. The second interview was conducted in a restaurant with a male Croat teacher, Goran. The last two interviews took place in Mostar in a conference room at the NDC. The first interview in this venue was with a male Bosniak teacher, Amir. A professional interpreter was hired for this interview. The second was with Amina, a female Bosniak teacher. The setting did not seem to have a deep impact on the nature of the interaction in the interviews, with one exception. While conducting the interview with Olja in the Café in Stolac, the background noise made it impossible to use a sound recorder. The noise also created difficulties in hearing what the informant was saying.

I prepared an interview guide prior to meeting the participants. It was to be used during the interviews to make sure that certain important topics were discussed. The interview questions explored local ethnic relations before, during and after the war. There were also questions about how the participants viewed and related to people with a different ethnic identity before and after joining the Nansen dialogue seminars. The intention with these questions was to explore the dialogue seminars' impact on ethnic relations in Stolac. If the dialogue seminars had had a significant impact, I was expecting to find that the teachers would have gained more positive attitudes towards "the other" after joining the seminars, and also that these positive attitudes would have had an affect on the participants' ethnic relations and behaviour towards people with a different ethnic identity. I would for example expect them to find it natural to reach across ethnic lines to seek engagement (Stover & Weinstein, 2004a: 339). Furthermore, I was anticipating that the level of "suspicion" towards "the other" group would be low if the dialogue seminars had had a perceptible impact (Biro et al. 187-197).

My interview style can be characterised as flexible. Most of the questions from the interview guide were addressed, but the participants were also actively listened to and

additional questions were formulated according to their answers. The interviews lasted between one and three hours. The reason for this time difference was that some participants had more time available than others. In addition to this some participants were more talkative, which naturally increased the duration of the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 146-150).

A tape recorder was used for three of the interviews. The interviewees gave their consent to use the recorder. It is acknowledged that such devices can have a stifling effect on the informants; however, the recorder did not seem to affect the interviewees. As already mentioned, due to background noise the recorder was not used for the interview with Olja. I later discovered that having the interviews on tape was helpful in adjusting notes and clearing up misunderstandings (Michrina & Richards, 1996:54).

The interviews that were recorded were transcribed. The quotes from the transcriptions that are used in this thesis have been slightly adjusted in order to clarify the structure of the sentences, but the semantics of the sentences have been kept.

2.5.1 Other informants

In addition to the interviews with the teachers, several conversations with the employees at the NDC Mostar, including one informal interview with Elvir Djuliman took place. At the NDC Sarajevo, I had the opportunity to have an informal unstructured interview with Mustafa Cero. Due to the timing of my visit to BiH, I was unable to get in contact with participants affiliated with the NDC Sarajevo. Therefore, Cero suggested that he could submit some questions to participants from Srebrenica. Most of the participants in this group were not familiar with the English language, so Cero volunteered to translate the questions and answers. Since Cero works for the NDC one cannot be completely sure that these translations are not biased. However, due to my lack of knowledge of the Serbo-Croatian Bosnian language, and my limited economic resources, I was left with few other alternatives. In spite of the possible potential of translator bias, I did trust Cero to be a reliable

translator, and his assistance was highly appreciated. However, there is a potential of bias from the informants. They may have moderated their comments since they knew that a staff member from the NDC would interpret their answers. There is little opportunity to find out if the answers are biased or not, therefore it is only possible to make assumptions when interpreting the empirical data from these participants, and clear conclusions can therefore not be drawn.

Interviews and conversations with informants currently residing in BiH, not native to the country, are also included in this thesis. By including different perspectives, it is possible to get a more in depth understanding of the social and political context that is encompassing the participants. Tore I. Lindseth has lived in BiH for three years while working as an international judge at The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was interviewed for this thesis since he has developed an interest for the social and political context of the country. His personal views, as an outsider is an interesting supplement to the other empirical data. Kurt Bassuener was interviewed because he is an eminent political analyst, and he has a thorough knowledge of the social and political context of BiH.

2.5.2 The analysis of secondary resources

Per Hugaas' master's thesis (2006) is referred to in the analysis. Hugaas interviewed the mayor of Stolac in 2005. The findings from his empirical data are included in this thesis as a supplement to support the analysis of politicians' impact on ethnic segregation in Stolac. His methods used for generating the empirical data has been scrutinised, and it is believed to be reliable (Hugaas, 2006).

Various documents and reports (see bibliography) have been analysed in order to supplement the interview data. Through the analysis of secondary resources, the empirical findings could be compared to other research studies. This comparison made it easier to contextualise the empirical data. This analysis was an asset to this thesis because it could be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. Furthermore, since others have direct access to the documents and reports, this

analysis is more transparent than the analysis of the empirical data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 107-108).

2.5.3 The analysis of the empirical material

The approach used in the analysis can be characterised as both interpretive and inductive. The empirical material was organised into themes and topics relevant to the research questions. These topics were compared and interpreted through relevant reports and theories (Chambliss & Schutt, 2003: 182).

It is important to remember that when a person is interviewed, the thoughts and words expressed are part of a dynamic process where two people together, at one specific time, create the spoken conversation. Words that are expressed during an interview, therefore, have a different status than the transcribed words that are used as empirical material. Transcriptions can be read over and over again, and it is possible to interpret written material in different ways (Fog, 2004: 110-112). The researcher has a monopoly in interpreting the “truth” of the empirical material. This can lead to an ethical dilemma for the researcher, because, the subjective interpretation of the interviews will not necessarily get a warm welcome from the individual who participated in the conversation. It is necessary to be aware of the researcher’s power over the research subjects, and the aim should be not to take advantage of the power, but to try, as much as possible, to present the empirical material and the analysis from the “natives point of view” (Fog, 2004:258).

2.6 A reflection on the research methods

2.6.1 Impression management in the interview situation

“Conversation is not a neutral activity, and it does not give direct access to a persons mind” (Ellen, 1984:229).

“Social interaction” can be defined as *“all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another’s immediate presence; the term “an encounter” would do as well”* (Goffman, 1971:26). Ervin Goffman (1971) argues that when people engage in social interaction they manage the impressions they give of themselves towards others in ways that have many similarities to a “theatrical performance”. By “performance” Goffman means the individual’s act of adjusting expressions according to his or her audience. People adjust their impressions because they know that the way they express themselves towards an audience (in an interview the audience is the interviewer, and/or the people that will read the final product that is based on the interviews) has an affect on how they will be perceived, and what responses they will get. Most people will try to act in a way that hopefully will give them a response they favour (Goffman, 1971: 15-16). Therefore people over-communicate some traits, values, opinions etc., while others are under-communicated. When a person is performing he gives others access to his “frontstage”. *“Front”* can be defined as *“the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance”* (Goffman, 1971:32). The opposite of the frontstage is logically enough the “backstage”. The backstage is the “place” where individuals relax, drop their “front” and step out of character. It is considered to be more informal than the frontstage (Goffman, 1971: 15-16,114-119).

The interview situation is indeed an encounter. Thus, one must assume that performance takes place there, as well as in other social interactions. If Goffman’s concepts are applied to the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, the frontstage can be interpreted as the things the informants do or say in order to create a certain impression during the interview. Since the interview situation is often considered to be formal, it must be assumed that it may be difficult, or even impossible to get backstage access in this setting (Goffman, 1971: 15-16,114-119). However, it is important to note that the frontstage performance is *also* a performance and it is possible to convey “truths” about a person’s opinions and perspectives at the frontstage, as well as the backstage.

Could norms be affecting performance?

There are norms prescribing how the interviewer and the respondent should act during the interview. One of these norms is that the interviewee should try to be as honest as he or she can when answering questions. This norm can sometimes be incompatible to other norms that are apparent in social interaction, like for example the norm of not being socially deviant. Therefore even though honesty is highly valued in interviews, it may be weakened by conflicting norms (Williams, 1964). It is possible that my interviewees did put on a performance in order to follow the norm of “not being socially deviant”. Since intolerance and hostile attitudes are not considered to be positive personal traits, it is likely that *if* some of the teachers were hostile and intolerant towards others, they may have tried to word themselves in a way that would present a more positive image. This kind of performance is almost impossible to detect, unless one spends enough time with the participants to get backstage access. I am not inferring that the informants were dishonest in the interview situation, but it is possible that the answers they provided can have been influenced by social and psychological mechanisms such as these. This has been taken into account in the analysis of the empirical material.

2.6.2 The researcher’s possible influence on the interaction

People are continuously affected by the context they are in, and the individuals they interact with, during a social encounter. The researcher’s identities and cultural background therefore contribute to establish the context for the interview situation (Stewart, 1998: 31). Thus, the answers provided might have been affected by who the researcher is. Personal characteristics like status, age, religion and cultural background are therefore relevant for the interaction. For example, the researchers’ gender may have an effect on how the informants relate to the interviewer, and the answers they decide to give (Silverman, 2006:84). All interaction takes place in a “gendered” context. Even when the interviewer and the respondent are of same sex, gender is still a present variable that may have an affect on the interaction. Studies have shown that informants sometimes provide different information dependent on if

the researcher is of the same or the opposite sex (Silverman, 2000: 206). Due to the possible impact of gender bias, it was attempted to recruit a gender-balanced group of informants for this research study.

2.6.3 Bias, when our world is coloured by the glasses we wear

“Bias” can be understood as *“a concept indicating the categories and values of one’s horizon”* (Michrina & Richards, 1996: 29). All humans have cultural, political and personal biases. They constitute the structure of our worldview. Since people use their previous experiences to make sense of every new interpretation, it is impossible to have a completely unbiased “blank mind” when listening to informants. However, by being aware of the possible impact of researchers’ bias, it is easier to detect and limit the impact of bias when one is generating and interpreting the empirical data (Michrina & Richards, 1996: 29). While conducting the first interview I became aware of some of my own biases. I was expecting to find that the dialogue seminars had changed the participant’s hostile attitudes. I was also expecting that the participant had become friends with “the others” after the seminars. When the interviewee provided different answers than was anticipated, the initial thought I had was that this could limit the empirical data. After the interview however, I realised that I had had a premature interpretation of what I would find before the interview started. This challenged me to be more aware of my own bias.

The informants’ biases are difficult to avoid in qualitative research. As already mentioned, sometimes it can be almost impossible to find out if a person is saying what they actually think, or if they are adjusting the truth (or “performing”) in some ways in order to get a wanted response (Goffman, 1971: 15-16; Stewart, 1998: 28-30).

2.6.4 Generalisability of the interviews

A research is considered to have a high degree of generalisability if the findings are applicable to a population beyond the sample. The aim of this thesis, however, is not

to generate generalisable findings. The informants were chosen according to access. Since there are relatively few participants in each dialogue project, it was impossible to select a sample of representatives that would make it possible to make inferences about the whole population in BiH. However, even though one can not make generalisations of the empirical material, the findings in this thesis may be applicable to similar places where dialogue is used as a method to reconcile ethnic categories in segregated communities (Stewart, 1998:16).

2.7 Ethical considerations

Certain measures were done in an attempt to keep the research as ethical as possible. First of all, the participants were given a presentation of the aim and purpose of the research study, and they were informed about what would happen to the thesis once submitted. It was also made clear that their anonymity would be assured. The international informants and the NDC employees agreed to have their real names put in the analysis; the teachers and the participants from Srebrenica were given pseudonyms (Michrina & Richards, 1996: 98-106).

During the interviews, the informants were treated as ends in themselves. They were actively listened to, and they were free to talk about issues they found important, even if it wasn't always relevant to the research questions. Sometimes the questions from the interview guide were irrelevant to the participants' experiences. By letting the participants speak freely, insights and perspectives never considered previously were often discovered (Michrina & Richards, 1996: 98,106). The informants were told that they did not have to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with answering.

After the interviews, the informants were given a possibility to review the notes and transcriptions, before the analysis was conducted. This was done to ensure the respondent validation and to prevent the occurrence of researcher bias. It also gave the interviewees a possibility to supply new data or topics that had come to their

minds after they had had more time to think about the interview questions (Stewart, 1998:38).

So far a presentation of the methods that were used to produce the empirical material has been given. Before an analysis of this material can take place, it is necessary to first take a closer look at the history of BiH, and then give an introduction to what the NDN is and how it was created.

3. The Historical context of Bosnia-Herzegovina

3.1 "They were all neighbours"

Before the war, the different categories of people in BiH shared many cultural traits, but they also had feelings of ethnic belonging. A research study by Tone Bringa (1993) indicates that people in BiH were conscious of their affiliation with their respective ethnic categories before the war; however, ethnic identities did not affect their relationship towards members from another ethnic category in a negative way. Thus in spite of ethnic diversities, people managed to coexist peacefully for two generations (Bringa, 2004:190; Bringa & Debbie, 1993).

The findings from the empirical material in this thesis strengthen the view that people with different ethnic identities coexisted peacefully before the war. Elvir Djuliman, who works at the NDC Mostar, expressed that before the war Stolac was a multi-ethnic, mixed community. Intermarriage was not uncommon, and people of different ethnic categories were working side by side. Children were attending the same schools (Elvir, 2008 [conversation with author]). Olja explained that it was common for both her parents, to invite people over for coffee before the war. Ethnic affiliation was an irrelevant criterion for these invitations. Neighbours would also invite each other over to their houses during religious holidays, regardless if they were Muslims or Christians (Olja, 2008 [interview with author]). Amir, a male Bosniak teacher, had a similar memory of his hometown before the war.

We all lived close together. We had an idea of neighbourhood that included everyone. We played sports in the same teams. We had food together and we lived close to one another. Nobody paid attention to your nationality or ethnic identity before the war (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

In order to understand how a war could break out and destroy the seemingly peaceful relations between the ethnic categories, it is necessary to take a look at the historical events that shaped the country and left their footprint on the contemporary BiH.

3.2 The history of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia

BiH has been culturally diverse for many centuries. Until the 20th century, different empires and kingdoms have ruled the region, preventing it from achieving statehood and postponing modern problems of identity. From the beginning of the 14th century, BiH was incorporated in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans institutionalised the difference between people horizontally, according to professional activity and social class, and vertically according to legal-religious lines. Religious and cultural diversity was accepted. Intermarriage between Christians and Muslims was not common at this time because the church had an influence in juridical cases, particularly when it came to family matters. Many Serbs and Croats converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule because this allowed them to get access to respectable military positions (Gagnon, 2004:16-17; Mønnesland, 1992: 51-53).

In 1878 Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the Hapsburg (Austria and Hungary) Monarchy. In this monarchy a feudal structure was imposed, and people were less egalitarian than they had been in the Ottoman Empire. Religion and culture became more homogenous, and the Orthodox Church had more power than any other religion (Mønnesland, 1992: 54-55).

In 1918 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded. It was named Yugoslavia. King Alexander imposed royal dictatorship in 1929. Ethnicity was an important social identity at the time of this kingdom. A fear that one of the opposing ethnic groups would gain hegemonic control was developing among the population at this time. The Serbs formed the largest ethnic category in the Empire, and this was perceived as a threat to the existence of Croats. The Croats therefore organised military groups (Ustasi) that kidnapped, and sometimes killed Serbian leaders. As the situation escalated, the king felt it necessary to implement terror in his rule in order to gain control; he received help from the Chetniks. The Chetniks were loosely organised groups by the national police that most often belonged to the Serb category. They tried to control all opposition, often with violent results.

In 1941 Croatia managed to found The State of Croatia with support from the superpowers. Bosnia-Herzegovina was part of this state. The rulers of the State of Croatia wanted to cleanse the state from all Serbian influence. Many were killed and abused in this national project (Bringa, 2004:148-165; Mønnesland, 1994: 20).

3.2.1 Brotherhood and unity in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)

In the first election after the Second World War, Tito and his party “People’s Front” got 90 % of the votes in a parliamentary election. Shortly thereafter the current monarchy dissolved and Yugoslavia was declared a federal people’s republic consisting of six republics (one of them was BiH), and two autonomous provinces⁷. Tito had, with help from the Allies and Russia, managed to create a new Yugoslavia. He had a vision that people from all ethnic categories would live peacefully together in a modern, socialistic and ethnically neutral regime. With slogans like:” Brotherhood and Unity” Tito managed to build a new national identity. He also turned himself into a “father figure” that everyone in the new republic could accept, independent of their social class or ethnic belonging. The official Yugoslav ideology was revolving around the image of Tito as a heroic leader of the victorious Yugoslav partisans. Under Tito’s rule, ethnic identification was de-emphasised, and inter-ethnic marriages were common, particularly in BiH (Bringa, 2004: 73,148-165).

At the end of the 1970s Yugoslavia was undergoing an economical crisis. Production and export was stagnating. The unemployment rate was high, and the general standard of living was decreasing. In addition to this the country was in debt, and the inflation was reaching a high level (Mønnesland, 1992: 232).

⁷ The republics were Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The autonomous provinces were Vojvodina and Kosova (Bringa, 1995: 9,13,27).

3.2.2 The rise of Serb and Croat nationalism

Tito did not allow any critique against the Yugoslav regime. He imposed strict control over the media. Nationalism and “the use of religion for political purposes” were forbidden. However, since the regime had a decentralised federal system based on national foundation, feelings of nationalism were still flourishing in the population. Already in the 1970s and 1980s some intellectuals in different parts of the Yugoslav republic were starting to embrace and promote nationalism.

Some Serbian intellectuals voiced their dissatisfaction against Tito’s rule in the early 1980s. It was claimed that the regime was discriminating towards the Serbian people, and they argued that the only way to ensure continued existence and development for Serbs would be a territorial unity of the Serbian people. This meant uniting all Serbs under a Serbian national state. These ideas were drafted in a fifty-page document referred to as the “memorandum”. The Serbian party leadership condemned the document due to its nationalistic character. However, it did receive a warm welcome among disillusioned Serbs, and it caused a stir in countries where Serbian dominance was feared (Bringing, 2004: 74; Gagnon, 2004:227-228).

3.2.3 The disintegration of Yugoslavia

Tito died in 1980. Since he was seen as the symbol of Yugoslavia, his death created an atmosphere of fear and confusion. In the aftermath of his death it was suggested in public speeches and in newspaper commentaries, that the Yugoslav people would continue Tito’s legacy and deeds. However, many feared that Tito’s death would mean a change in the federation’s politics. People were wondering which direction Yugoslavia would head towards, and it was unclear if anyone would take Tito’s place.

Yugoslavia finally collapsed in 1990. Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman took advantage of the new political situation. They tried to establish themselves as leaders who were capable of continuing in Tito’s footsteps. They gained many supporters by

taking control over the media. The ethos of “Brotherhood and Unity” was replaced with a bigoted, exclusionist ethno-nationalism. With the sudden switch from a communist to a nationalist ideology the enemy was no longer, as Tito had defined, the outside foreign capitalists or Soviet powers. Instead the enemy was redefined to mean the “competing” Yugoslav nations within. The nationalist tendencies soon spread to Serbia and Croatia’s neighbouring countries, and people started developing a fear of what the future would bring. The social and political context leading up to the elections in 1990 was therefore tense (Bowman, 1996: 145; Bringa, 2004: 90-91, 167-186; Mønnesland, 1992: 243-246).

3.2.4 The election in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990, a war on identity?

In most of the elections held in post-Yugoslavia in 1990, the victorious political parties had something in common. They all called upon people in terms of their ethnic identities, and they all attributed the problems in society to scapegoats, which was usually synonymous with “the other” ethnic categories. The problem with the new political platforms was that they were not organised around plans for serious and attainable structural changes in the political and economical domains. Instead the politicians emphasised that they should come into power because they would express the will of the ethnic groups they claimed to represent. Some politicians were more moderate, but they did not gain support from the majority of the population. People started fearing that “the other” ethnic groups would get the majority votes. Their safest bet was therefore to vote on the political party that represented “their group”. In other words, most people felt that they had to vote according to ethnic lines out of fear of what would happen if they didn’t (Bowman, 1996:146-147).

Before the election in BiH in 1990, it was acknowledged that the country faced three options. They could either join Serbia in the remains of Yugoslavia (something that the Muslims and Croats would object to) they could agree on a partition between Croatia and Serbia (as Milošević and Tuđman wanted) or they could become an independent state. The Muslims did not want to be incorporated in Croatia or Serbia.

Instead they would prefer an independent state, which the Serbs would never accept (Mønnesland, 1992: 258-288). If BiH were to survive as a state, however, it had to be identified as a nation state directly associated with its territory (Bringa, 1995:35-36). In BiH there were 40 % Muslims, 33 % Serbs, 18% Croats, and 9% others⁸. This meant that legitimising nationality on ethnic terms would be challenging in the current situation (Bowman, 1996: 145-150; Bringa, 1995: 35-36).

3.2.5 The violence begins

One theory suggests that one of the reasons why the violence in the war broke out was because a segment of the Yugoslav elite inflicted it upon a diverse, plural community in an attempt to demobilise them and thereby construct homogeneous political spaces. There is evidence to suggest that this was done in order to create a political environment that would influence people to vote according to ethnic affiliation. The best way to create fear and separation in a society is by inflicting violence on individuals. This strategy is commonly used by elites who are faced with a serious threat to their interests and values. When the structure of power is threatened, elites have a choice between protecting their status quo, or accepting change and attempt to secure a place in the new order. In BiH many politicians were desperate to secure their political power (Gagnon, 2004:7-9).

3.2.6 The war

(...) I could talk for three days about what's happened here. But you will never, never get the full picture
(...)(Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

As Goran expresses, much has happened in Stolac, and it is almost impossible to get a full picture of all the stories and events that has left its marks on BiH. Instead of giving an account of historical facts and dates from the war, it will instead be attended to what the war actually did to individuals and ethnic relations. However, it

⁸ The last category includes people who refused to define themselves according to ethnicity.

is impossible to sum up all the atrocities committed during the war in one paragraph, so the next section presented is at best a simplification.

The war had an impact on all aspects of life for regular people in BiH. The economy crashed, and the country's food supplies stagnated. The worst part of the war however, was probably the psychological trauma it inflicted upon people (Bringa, 2005: 187-188). About 250,000⁹ people lost their lives in the war in BiH. Many more were wounded. The most common causes were mines, shelling or sniper fire. Thousands of bodies still remain unaccounted for. Friends and families of the victims are desperate to know what happened to their loved ones. The perpetrators were often members of the victims' own pre-war societies, and it was not uncommon that the victims knew their perpetrators by name. Many people who were subject to rapes or other atrocities have discovered that psychological traumas can prevail long after the harm is inflicted upon them. Even when perpetrators are behind locked doors, gruesome memories are still running free within the minds of the victims (Bringa, 2005: 187-198). Remnants of the war are also physically visible in the marks from shelling and grenades on buildings and roads, all over the country. Approximately 30 % of all residential buildings were damaged or destroyed. Public, civilian, and cultural institutions such as schools, churches, mosques, hospitals, libraries and factories were also destroyed. It has been estimated that Bosniaks as a category suffered the most during the war, however, it should be emphasised that they were not the only victims. Probably all citizens of BiH have been affected by the atrocities in one-way or another, whether they be Bosniaks, Croats, or Serbs.

⁹ According to Bringa (2005) the total numbers of deaths is debated. However, the agency for Statistics in BiH estimate that 278.800 people were murdered died in battle or disappeared during the war (Bringa, 2005: 198).

3.2.7 The Dayton Accords

In December 1995 a peace agreement was initialled in Dayton Ohio. This agreement was inspired by the ideologies behind the Democratic Peace Theory¹⁰. The Dayton Accords were meant to stop the violence in BiH and provide equal rights for the ethnic categories in the country (Paris, 2004: 103). In brief, the agreement was that Bosnia-Herzegovina was to become a consociational democracy, and the country was split into the Serb Republic, which today has a majority of Serb citizens, and the Croat-Bosniak Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (FBiH) where Croats and Bosniaks are in majority. This federation is now divided into ten cantons (Bose, 2002: 2-7, 23). The problem with the Dayton Accords is that it did not provide any political framework for the process of reconciliation. No governmental leadership has therefore fostered reconciliation between the ethnic categories. Instead, such activities have been initiated from the grass root level (Burns et al., 2003:92). In September 1996 the first election after the war was held. The victorious parties in the elections were the nationalistic politicians that were against reconciliation of the ethnic categories. It has been argued that BiH was not ready to have an election this soon. The elections were intended to create mechanisms that would facilitate co-operation. Instead they seemed to have reaffirmed ethnic hostility and the ethnic categories were reified. Thus, the elections seemed to make the country more segregated (Paris, 2004: 103).

Problems with the Dayton Accords and how this political system indirectly may influence ethnic relations in Stolac will be explained further in the analysis chapter. In the next section there will be given an account of how the war has affected the contemporary political and social context of Stolac.

¹⁰ For a review of this theory see chapter 1 “Positioning of core concepts”.

3.3 The contemporary context of Stolac

The population of Stolac went through unimaginable sufferings during the war. Djuliman explained that because of everything that has happened, the social interaction between people with different ethnic identities in Stolac today is almost nonexistent. Some neighbourhoods are still mixed, but even in these areas, people from different ethnic categories seem to avoid contact with one another. It is as if there is an invisible wall between them. They attend different cafes and shops, and as already mentioned, the schools are highly segregated. The students attend classes at different time-periods during the day and in different parts of the school building (Djuliman, 2008 [conversation with author]). There are many reasons why the ethnic segregation in Stolac is strong. One reason for the discontent among the Muslims returnees in the town is that they are confined to a ghetto existence far away from the town centre, which used to be a proud Muslim presence in Stolac from the Ottoman era. Goran, who is a Croat, explained how he viewed this situation:

Before the war Stolac was dominated by the Muslims. In the city of Stolac, 80% of the residents have been Bosniaks. But the villages around Stolac were mostly populated by the Croats. Now the city has four mosques and one church. The war pushed things in a different way. Now in city of Stolac we have 60 % of Croats, 40 % of Bosniaks. They don't like it. They have always dominated the City. (...) They've been in majority in Stolac for almost 400 years. And now everything is changed in five years. Many of them will never, never understand that. They don't want to understand that. If you now go to Stolac you will see that a big part of Stolac is from Turkish [Ottoman] time. When people first see Stolac they think this is a Muslim town. So when you come to the city and talk to Bosniaks, they tell you " Yeah this is our city but Croats, until the war Croats put us in the side. We are now small. Nobody respect us" (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

As Goran explains, there have been changes to where people now geographically reside as opposed to where they lived before the war. It seems like Goran thinks that since the Bosniaks have populated the city centre of Stolac for 400 years, it is now the Croats turn to live there. The problem is that when Croats moved into the town of Stolac during and after the war, it most likely meant that they had to move into areas or houses, which were previously occupied by people who had fled. When people started returning to their homes after the war, citizens in Stolac had different opinions

about rights regarding vacant, abandoned houses. The violence against returnees in Stolac was at the highest level in BiH at the beginning of this millennium (Bose, 2002: 101-102).

Olja explained that the relationships between people with different ethnic identities are not the same as they used to be. In the beginning when people started returning to Stolac, it was difficult for people who knew each other before the war to communicate. Recently this has improved slightly, however, she says, it takes time for things to get back to normal (Olja, 2008 [interview with author]). It seems that people in Stolac find it difficult to trust each other after everything that's happened during the war. Oxford Research International (ORI)(2007) has conducted a research in BiH on behalf of United Nations Development Programme¹¹. In the report "Silent Majority Speaks", the findings indicate that most people in BiH do not trust each other very much. Only one in 14 respondents (7, 2 %) said that they believed it is possible trust other people (ORI, 2007, section 2: 14).

Goran was asked about how people in his community relate to people with a different ethnic identity today. He answered that he thinks that there is a "negative atmosphere" in town because of the things that happened during the war.

It is still a big problem. (...) We have to live with them. That is a fact, but I have 200 Croat friends, and maybe three, four or five Muslim friends. Everybody is like that. Croats keeping friends Croats, Muslims, Muslims, and it still is one very negative atmosphere in town. Somebody said, maybe everything here will be fixed with the next war. Many think that nothing is solved here. And the way to fix things permanently here is another war. Maybe 30% of people in Stolac think this. Both sides. (...) Stolac became a black point of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I could talk for three days about what's happened here. But you will never, never get the full picture. When the Serbs occupied the city, we Croats left. We ran away, but Muslims stayed in the city. Three months later we came with our army and liberated Stolac. And the Muslims didn't run away. They stayed in the city again. So they liked Serbs three months and then they liked Croats three months later. And after a while they wanted to take the city under Muslim control. So in Stolac there were fights like in Mostar. Now it's a very

¹¹ In this research 3,580 respondents from different parts of BiH answered surveys. This was supplemented with 20 focus groups with displaced discussant in different locations across BiH.

strange situation. Everybody looks at each other in a very strange way (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

Goran further argues that the relationships between people with different ethnic identities probably would have been better if they were living in a different country. According to him the economical standard in Stolac makes things worse. It increases hostility towards others.

In Italy for example, you never hear about Croats and Muslims from BiH fighting. They are drinking together etc. Here everybody have too much stuff in his or her minds. It is hard. In Norway everyone wants progress and good job. The standard and economics in Norway is fantastic. Here people are hungry. 40% in Stolac barely have enough to live for, month after month; this makes a big difference (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

Amir also expresses that it is difficult for people with different ethnic identities to get along in Stolac today.

Today it's difficult for people with different ethnic identities to have a good relationship. Children for example look towards the other side to see what's different instead of seeing what they have in common. Once they meet the other children they realise that they have many things in common, in spite of their different ethnic background (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Amir, Goran and Olja indicate that it has been difficult for Croats and Bosniaks to trust and interact with each other after the war. Goran even says he thinks that 30% of the population is expecting a new war to break out. One organisation that wants to bring people with different ethnic identities in Stolac together so that they can realise their common grounds, and improve "the negative atmosphere" is the NDC in Mostar. In order to provide an understanding of the ideology and intentions behind this centre; an introduction to the aim and origin of the NDN will be given in the next chapter.

4. The Nansen Dialogue Network

4.1 In the Olympic spirit

The Winter Olympics in Lillehammer 1994 received a great deal of attention in the Norwegian media. However, in the midst of articles about victorious sportsmen, fear striking pictures from the war in the former Yugoslavia served as a deep contrast to the peaceful, international games taking place. Sarajevo, which proudly hosted the winter Olympics in 1984, was under siege and the population was suffering. It was during this time that Inge Eidsvåg took the initiative to start a new dialogue project at the Nansen Academy. He had a vision that it was possible to strengthen hopes for peace through generating positive attitudes in influential people by bringing them together in dialogue (Røhr, 2005a: 1-2).

4.2 The fight for humanitarian values

The Nansen Academy was established on the 18th of March 1939, as an opposition to the Second World War and the fascist ideology that was sweeping over Europe at the time. The founders Kristian Schelderup and Anders Wyller wanted to create a place where humanistic values could be expressed. The vision was to establish an academy where the central focus for the education would be on the spirit, socio-economic and social questions, and religious and artistic life. The intention was that the school could be influential in the fight against violence, war, prejudice and intolerance. The core of the Nansen ideology was, and still is; that humans should have respect for people, justice and freedom, and that they should spread love towards their “neighbours”. Even though the founding fathers of the Nansen Academy shared a faith in Christianity, they named the school after Fritjof Nansen who was known to be an agnostic. Nansen was a famous adventurer, but he was also well known for his humanitarian work in Eastern Europe. Inge Eidsvåg (2006) believes that the naming

of the academy after Nansen was a conscious choice. He argues this was done to express that the realisation of humanism is more important than the ideological intentions behinds actions.

The Nansen Academy has been functioning as a “people’s college”¹² ever since it was founded. Today, however, many people first think of reconciliation, conflict resolution and dialogue when they hear the name “Nansen Academy” (Eidsvåg, 2006:16-18).

4.2.1 Reaching out to “neighbours”

It was the humanistic ideology that inspired the employees at the Nansen Academy to initiate dialogues in the 1990s. In the beginning they arranged dialogues between people with different religious and ethnic backgrounds living in Norway. Later, as already mentioned, Eidsvåg came up with the idea to arrange a new dialogue project with people from war zones in the former Yugoslavia. The Nansen Academy co-operated with the Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Red Cross, and the Institute for Peace Research (PRIO). Together they formed the Nansen Dialogue Network in 1995. Shortly thereafter, a dialogue project called “Democracy, human rights, and peaceful conflict- resolution” was established. The Nansen Academy invited people from the former Yugoslavia with different ethnic identities, gender, religious and political background to participate in the project. The participants were all potential leaders or people who were influential in their local societies (Eidsvåg, 2006: 20-21). The aim was to create a space where actors in serious conflicts could meet face to face and get a chance to break down enemy images and gain acceptance and understanding of “the other”(Røhr, 2005a: 2). Thus, the goal was to use dialogue as an idea and method in order to strengthen people living in conflict areas, so that they hopefully could contribute to a peaceful conflict resolution and democratic development (Eidsvåg, 2006: 20-21).

¹² A “people’s college” is a school, which is open for all people over 18. In these schools there are usually no examinations, and the focus is on doing enjoyable activities like learning, dancing, drawing, snowboarding etc. These schools usually have a Christian or humanitarian ideology, which inspires and sets the agenda for how the schools are run.

4.3 Local dialogue centres

Some of those who participated in the dialogue projects wanted to apply the insights they gained in Lillehammer to their own communities, and continue working for reconciliation and the diminishing of ethnic segregation there. This resulted in the developing of NDCs in the Balkan area. From 1999 to 2004, ten such local dialogue centres were established. In BiH there are dialogue centres in Mostar, Banja Luka and Sarajevo. The local dialogue centres contribute to 90% of the work done in the NDN today. They are locally administrated, and the employees are also recruited locally. However, they all have a strong affiliation to the Nansen Academy, and they share a common network administration in Norway. Dialogue takes place at the local centres, and participants are also usually sent to Lillehammer to take part in dialogue seminars there, as a part and continuation of the local dialogue process (Bryn, 2005:31; Røhr, 2005a: 3).

4.3.1 The Nansen dialogue centres in Mostar and Sarajevo

As previously mentioned I visited employees at the NDC Mostar and NDC Sarajevo during my visit to BiH. Both centres share the same ideology and approach towards dialogue as the Nansen Academy and they focus on municipalities that were deeply affected by the war, and still suffer from it. At the centres I was informed about different projects these centres have launched. In the following, I will give a brief account of the projects attended by my informants.

The NDC Mostar

The NDC Mostar has previously arranged seminars for, among others, journalists, young politicians and students. They also frequently arrange open lectures about democracy, corruption and dialogue. As already mentioned the main informants in this thesis were high school teachers from a town called Stolac. This town is situated about 35km from Mostar. In the Stolac High School, there are approximately 50 teachers. The teachers, and children, attend the school at two different periods during the day and they use different parts of the building. The whole school, including the

curriculum is split in two, one Croat, and one Muslim (Bosniak) part. This means that the inter-ethnic contact between the teachers and the students is almost non-existent. The dialogue project involving the teachers in Stolac was launched in the first half of 2007 because the NDC Mostar saw that it was necessary to introduce a level of inter-ethnic co-operation at the school. The students and teachers needed to get together and discuss problems that affected both sides of the school (Djuliman, 2008 [conversation with author]).

The NDC Sarajevo

Most of the projects that the NDC Sarajevo is engaged with are directed at the towns Srebrenica and Bratunac. The two participants from Srebrenica that are interviewed in relation to this thesis are involved with a project called: “Municipality-Returnees Dialogue”. It has been ongoing since 2006. In this project local people working in areas such as local administrations, schools, NGO’s, health sector, civil services etc are participating. The aim with the dialogue seminars is to improve the non-existing contact between people of different ethnic categories in these communities (Cero, 2008 [conversation with author]). In the next section it will be explained briefly how it may be possible for the Nansen dialogue seminars to reduce hostile attitudes and fertilise the grounds for reconciliation.

4.4 Seeing “the other” through dialogue

Since the participants in the dialogue seminars organised by the NDN are so different in relation to age, education and character, the methods used have been adjusted to those participating. For example dialogue seminars involving youth are very different from seminars arranged for politicians. There are, however, some characteristics that most of the seminars share (Røhr, 2005a: 4).

All the seminars have some principles in common, which are believed to be crucial. First of all, trained facilitators hold them. These facilitators know when to push the participants into dialogue and when to make sure that the conversation does not take

an unfortunate turn. They try to be neutral, and they also try not to influence the participants with their own values and perceptions. Secondly, all participants are given the opportunity to express themselves freely within a secure framework. It is important that the perceptions and experiences of all the participants are heard. Personal security (that people can speak without fear of recrimination) is also crucial to the dialogue process. When all these conditions are fulfilled, it becomes possible for the participants to express themselves without pressure and without a significant risk of being misunderstood (Aarbakke, 2002).

At the dialogue seminars held in Lillehammer, the actual physical location combined with the agenda for the seminars becomes important to the dialogue process. Here participants are obliged to live together and discuss their problems for a longer period of time. The days, and sometimes weeks provided for dialogues and socialising in Lillehammer makes it possible for everyone to have his or her opinions heard. Activities such as skiing and bowling are included as important parts of the program. These activities serve as tension relievers, and they also allow the participants to see their “enemies” in a new setting, where previous categories do not apply. The new contexts may allow the participants to let down their guards and give access to their backstage¹³. Many participants develop friendly relations, and this may break down enemy images and hostile attitudes. When participants gain new perspectives of “the other”, greater acceptance and understanding is usually gained (Cleven, 2005: 45-46; Maoz, 2000). Dialogue seminars, then, aim to reduce hostile attitudes through a process where people learn to see “the other” in a new way. When different parties develop an understanding for one another, it can become easier for them to live together and to co-operate (Aarbakke, 2002; Høeg-Krogh, 2005; Maoz, 2000). Research has shown that it is possible for dialogue seminars to reduce people’s hostile attitudes (Aarbakke, 2002; Maoz, 2000). However, when investigating what impact the dialogue seminars have on ethnic relations locally, it is also necessary to

¹³ Review Goffman (1971) referred to in the methods chapter.

examine what impact they have had individuals' behaviours towards the others. In the next chapter an evaluation of the possible impact the dialogue seminars have had on the participants' relations with and behaviour towards "the others" will be given.

5. Ambivalence in Stolac

5.1 The structure of the analysis

As stated the original aim of this thesis was to investigate if the dialogue seminars organised by the NDCs have had a perceptible impact on ethnic relations locally. However, as mentioned in the introduction, based on the empirical data, this research question was supplemented with an additional question that asks why there is a relative absence of newly initiated inter-ethnic social relationships involving the participants from Stolac.

The first part of the analysis will be devoted to explaining the nature of the participants' ethnic relations before they entered the dialogue project. This will be compared to how their views or relations are after having participated. In the second part of the analysis, a comparison of the participants from Stolac and the participants from Srebrenica will be made. The third part of the analysis will focus on the second research question. Possible structures or mechanism in Stolac that may have an impact on ethnic relations, and the participants' behaviours towards "the others" will be explored. Finally, in the last part of the analysis some ways in which the participants and the NDC could improve the impact of the dialogue seminars are suggested.

5.1.1 Two important notifications on limitations in the empirical data

In the methods chapter it was explained that people sometimes modify what they say or do, in order to get a wanted response from their audience. It was also mentioned that during the interviews conducted for this thesis there was little opportunity to get "backstage" to find out how the interviewees would respond when they put their guard down. Therefore it is possible that the answers provided in the interviews were part of a "performance". The teachers may have been under-communicating hostile

attitudes, and over-communicating tolerant attitudes (Goffman, 1971). Since the assumptions made in this analysis are based on what the teachers decided to tell, it is not possible to draw clear conclusions from the empirical material. However, in spite of the possibilities that the interviewees were “performing”, the information they provided does give some knowledge about their ethnic relations.

Once again there is a need to stress that due to the insignificant time provided for fieldwork, the comprehensiveness and extent of the empirical material is limited. However, as already mentioned, it is still possible to generate knowledge, or assumptions from the empirical material. Therefore, in spite of all the methodological limitations, this analysis chapter will provide some insights about what impact the dialogue may have had on ethnic relations in Stolac.

5.2 The dialogue seminars’ possible impact on the participants

In order to get an understanding of what impact the dialogue seminars may have had on the participants, it is necessary to explain what characterised their relations towards people with a different ethnic identity before joining the dialogue seminars.

5.2.1 Before entering the dialogue seminars

The NDCs recruit people they believe will benefit from entering their projects. Thus, the participants do not constitute a representative sample of the population. This means that one cannot generalise the participants’ attitudes and ability for inter-ethnic co-operation to the whole population of BiH. Amina, Amir and Goran had participated in other reconciliation projects before joining the NDP. Their willingness to join these projects may indicate that they were open for contact, and supportive of attempts to create more inter-ethnic interaction in their communities before they joined the NDP. Amir described a seminar he attended which was about people helping “the other side” during the war:

I was a part of this project done by my University. The project was about how people from different ethnic groups helped each other during the war. Of course all the information given in this seminar was secret. Because if the names of those who helped others were exposed, they would probably be exposed to some pressure and maybe their community would reject them. During the war it was immoral to help the other side (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Here Amir explains that the seminar was “secret” to *protect* the participants. Since he mentions that the secrecy of this seminar was to ensure the protection of the participants, it is possible to assume that there was a level of danger or sanctions associated with joining this seminar. Amir still joined the seminar, even though participating in that seminar was associated with risks. It is therefore possible to assume that Amir had moderate attitudes towards people with a different ethnic identity before entering the NDP. When Amir was asked if his relationship towards Catholics had changed after joining the NDP he said that he did not have a “problem” with Catholics.

I can’t change my point of view based on meeting 3-4 people. It is not my relationship towards Catholics that is the problem. I do not have a problem with that (...) (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

This quote strengthens the view of Amir as a man with moderate attitudes towards people with different ethnic identities. He was not alone in showing willingness for inter-ethnic interaction. Amina also expressed that she did not have negative thoughts about “other” people. On the contrary she was interested in learning about other religions.

I have met so many people in my life and I don’t have a wrong thought about the people. And I am the kind of person who likes to meet the people. I read a lot about religions. That is all very interesting for me (...) (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

In this quote Amina gives the impression that she wants to “meet the people”. She also says that she reads about other religions, which may indicate that she is trying to learn and understand others’ point of view. It is therefore possible to assume that Amina was tolerant and that she had moderate attitudes towards people with a different ethnic identity before joining the dialogue seminars.

At one point during the interview, Olja said something that does question if she was as tolerant as she gave the impression to be. She said that she could sit and have coffee with anyone, but doing something together was more difficult (Olja, 2008 [interview with author]). Because Olja had the perception that it was “difficult” for people with different ethnic identities to work together, she was sceptical to the dialogue seminars’ ability to improve the situation between the teachers. There can be many possible reasons why she felt that the teachers would have difficulties “doing something together”. Maybe she assumed that the Croats and Bosniaks had incompatible views or ways of working, which would make co-operation difficult? Or maybe she believed that it would be difficult for them to work together because they had hostile attitudes towards one another?

5.2.2 Views on dialogue seminars and inter-ethnic co-operation

The teachers did appear to have had a lack of faith in inter-ethnic co-operation and reconciliation projects before entering the Nansen dialogue seminars. This scepticism was based on the already mentioned negative experiences they had with other NGOs (non governmental organisations). Goran explained that his past experiences had made him reluctant to join the dialogue seminars at first. He had the impression that most people arranging seminars in BiH were corrupted and only interested in making money. However, since Goran felt that the NDC and Steinar Bryn had a different approach and work ethic than other NGOs, Bryn still managed to recruit him.

Goran: I said to doctor Steiner Bryn. I have been to maybe 30-40 seminars inside Bosnia, and every seminar has been a disaster. So when he came to Stolac and said he was going to take us to Norway to a seminar in Lillehammer. I told him I didn’t expect anything less but disaster.

Elisabeth: But why did you still enter it then?

Goran: (...) for me the seminars [not organised by the NDC] have been very bad experiences. They are organising seminars just for a couple of people in the hopes that they will drop out, so they can collect the money that they were given to organise the seminars. Steinar seems to me like some kind of very different person (...) (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

Olja mentioned that she did not have any expectations about the NDP before entering. She said that even though she personally had not participated in dialogue seminars before, she knew of the failed projects some of the older teachers had been involved with. For this reason she did not trust NGOs. She joined the Nansen dialogue seminars in spite of her lack of belief in it because she felt that, as a teacher, she should try anything that could benefit the school. All the teachers were desperate to find solutions to certain problems the school was facing (Olja, 2008 [interview with author]).

Findings in the previously mentioned report from ORI (2007): “Silent Majority Speaks”, highly correspond to my informants’ attitudes towards NGOs. In the research study, 68, 7% of the informants answering surveys believed that international organisations are affected by corruption (section 6:46). In general the research indicated that international organisations are mostly mistrusted (ORI, 2007, section 2: 15).

5.2.3 Possible changes in the participants from Stolacs’ ethnic relations

Elvir Djuliman explained that it is difficult to measure the effects the dialogue seminars have on participants. He said that when you are working with people and relationships between people, it is difficult to see a concrete outcome of your work. It is hard to measure attitudes for example. However, the employees at the NDC Mostar have been able to see some positive results, when they have compared how the participants have behaved in different seminars. The teachers from Stolac are now more able to discuss joint problems together than they were in the beginning of the process, and they want to find solutions to how they can improve the school together. None of the teachers have expressed that they have problems working with “the other” (Djuliman, 2008 [conversation with author]). Like Djuliman expressed, it is difficult to measure attitudinal changes in people. Scales developed for this purpose exist (Biro et al., 2004:187-190), but even when these are used with caution, one can never be quite sure if one is really measuring what one wants to measure. Human

thought and human behaviour is dynamic and therefore constantly subject to changes. However, it is possible to *make assumptions* about attitude changes. As previously mentioned, most of the written work on dialogue projects supports the conception that dialogue seminars in general do have a positive effect on reducing hostile attitudes in participants, and it usually brings them closer together (Aarbakke, 2002; Høegh-Krohn, 2005; Maoz, 2000). Some empirical data from my research study indicate that changes in the way the teachers from Stolac view and relate to people with a different ethnic identity may have occurred. Amir expressed that the seminars had given him a more liberal point of view towards himself and his community. He also mentioned that he tries to spread this attitude to others.

(...) The seminars (...) help you resolve certain things within yourself. And then after you are done with this you learn certain things that you can later on transfer to your students or to your community. You sort of receive a more liberal point of view towards yourself and towards your community. And you try to spread this attitude around (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

When Amina was questioned about her impressions of the dialogue seminars she said that one of the most positive aspects of it was that it brings people closer to each other.

I think it's very positive. And I think that they have done a lot to make people closer to each other (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

Olja mentioned that even though some of the teachers had become friends during the seminars she did not feel that the relationships between them changed dramatically. However, she felt that their views had been altered, and that they had become more open to ideas. They had also realised that they had the same needs and goals for the Stolac High School (Olja, 2008[interview with author]). Amir confirmed that the teachers shared the same thoughts and ideas during the seminars. He also mentioned that there has been some communication between the teachers after they joined.

I met 90% of these teachers for the first time at the first seminar. Now after the seminars we got familiarised with each other. We shared the same problems, thoughts and ideas. And now after the seminars of course we communicate (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

When considering examples presented so far, it seems as if the dialogue seminars have had an impact on the way the participants relate to one another. Through the dialogue seminars they became more aware of some of their similarities, like common problems and goals regarding the school. It also made them realise that they can solve problems together. Even though the relations between the teachers have not undergone significant changes, there has been some communication between them in retrospect. Hence, they confirm that they have become closer to one another.

I will now move on to addressing some findings from the interviews with two of the participants from Srebenica. The relations among participants seemed to have developed far more progressively there.

5.2.4 Comparing the participants from Stolac to the participants from Srebenica

The participants from Srebenica have been taking part in dialogue seminars approximately one year longer than the participants from Stolac. They were asked if their relationships towards the other participants had changed during the dialogue process. Their responses suggest that the seminars did contribute to far more positive changes regarding the frequency of social encounters among group members in the group from Srebenica than in the other group. Alma said that the participants in her group had become friends.

We [the participants] introduced each other, exchange opinions on certain problems and issues, and we became friends (Alma, 2008 [translated email interview with author]).

Jelena explained that if she has any problems she can turn to the friends she gained during the dialogue seminars. She is still in contact with the majority of them, and they are socialising.

I made friendships with participants. We had nice time, socialising together. These friendships remained in a way that I use any possibility to be in contact or to see them. We help each other if it is needed. (...) I am in contact with the majority of them. We are socialising (Jelena, 2008 [translated email interview with author]).

The participants from Srebrenica interviewed for this thesis seem to have developed stronger relationships towards one another than the participants from Stolac did. Furthermore, these participants expressed that they were pleased with the community that had been established within their group. They mentioned that they now feel as if they share a common “Nansen identity”, and they often refer to other members as “family”.

Participants who were at the seminar became a part of the Nansen group and it has been created a so-called “Nansen identity”. Each participant identifies herself/himself with this identity. This identity keeps us closer and more connected (Jelena, 2008 [translated email interview with author]).

It has been created a “Nansen identity” among participants. We feel like members of one “Nansen family” who share the same ideas – ideas of establishing of better relationships with our neighbours (Amna, 2008 [translated email interview with author]).

There are many possible explanations for why the relationships among the participants have developed so differently in the two groups. Out of mere speculation one could suggest that maybe the more time spent together increases security and belonging within the groups. According to the “contact hypothesis” it is possible to reduce prejudices and improve inter-group relations, if the “conditions are optimal”¹⁴ (Allport, 1954, in Hewstone et al., 2005:271-272). It is feasible to suggest that since the participants from Srebrenica have had more contact with one another this may have reduced prejudices and created a sense of security and openness within their group. Moreover, if participants feel secure, and if they develop moderate attitudes towards one another, it is easier for friendships to develop. Høeg-Krohn (2005) has explained that the dialogue seminars organised by the NDN do fulfil the conditions for the contact hypothesis¹⁵. Since all the NDCs arrange their dialogue seminars according to the same criteria, it is unlikely that the differences between the group from Srebrenica and the group from Stolac have anything to do with lack of fulfilling

¹⁴ For a list of conditions necessary for prejudices to be reduced see Hewstone et al., 2005:271-272.

¹⁵ Due to limitations of the empirical material, a discussion on whether the NDC Mostar and the NDC Sarajevo satisfy the criteria for the contact hypothesis will not be done.

conditions for inter-group contact. However, according to the contact hypothesis, inter-group relations will be improved if contact between group members occurs over a long period of time. The time factor then, may explain the significant difference in ethnic relations between the group from Stolac and the group from Srebrenica. This may indicate that if the participants from Stolac spend more time together, the ethnic relations in the group may strengthen, and this may lower the threshold for initiating contact with “the other” participants.

It is also possible that a common group identity, like the “Nansen identity”, has created strong bonds between the participants from Srebrenica. Chigas and Ganson (2003) have argued that bonds between participants must be robust if they are to survive changes and pressure from the political and psychological climate. As will be explained later in this chapter it seems as if the social and political climate in BiH is limiting ethnic interaction in Stolac. Since a common identity was not created in the group from Stolac¹⁶, it is possible that the bonds between them still need time to develop and become stronger, so that the relations between the participants can survive social and political changes (Chigas & Ganson, 2003: 73).

However, it could also be that the participants in the group from Srebrenica have different personal characteristics than the individuals in the other group. Different characteristics may make them more susceptible to engaging in inter-ethnic interaction. Or maybe inter-ethnic co-operation is more accepted and supported in Srebrenica than in Stolac? It would have been interesting to further explore the possible reasons for the differences in the two groups. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis prohibits a more detailed analysis of the possible reasons for the variations in the dialogue seminars’ impact on ethnic relations in these two groups. Instead, it will now be illustrated how the dialogue seminars can have an impact on ethnic relations in Stolac.

¹⁶ This is based on the analysis of the empirical material. It is possible that the participants from Stolac did create feelings of a common identity. However, no such references were made in the interviews.

5.3 The symbolic value of being together

“Of course it is good for the school” (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Teachers have an impact on their students. They are often regarded as role models. If the teachers from Stolac project positive attitudes towards ethnic interaction and ethnic relations in their education, it is possible that this may contribute to the reduction of hostile attitudes and fear towards “the others” in the students. Amir explained how he viewed the teachers’ roles.

(...) The most important thing is the student. We set an example to them in the classrooms and in the hallways. And in spite of what some people think, the students do look at us. If they see that teachers with different ethnic identities don’t greet each other, they will do the same (...) (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Amir stresses that the teachers set an example to the students. Students may adopt the teachers’ attitudes and behaviours towards “the others”. Therefore, when the teachers co-operate and interact, the chances are that the children may follow their example. The students are the future workers and citizens of Stolac. By encouraging moderate attitudes and functional inter-ethnic relationships among the students, the teachers may be able to influence people in Stolac in a way that may eventually improve the grounds for reconciliation. The act of “being together” and solving joint problems may therefore give a message to everyone in Stolac that inter-ethnic co-operation is possible. Amina mentioned that the co-operation among the teachers could teach the students that they should “forget about the past” and get closer to each other.

Elisabeth: What do you think the students think about the fact that the teachers from the different parts of the school come together?

Amina: I think it has a positive effect.

Elisabeth: How?

Amina: Maybe they feel that everything is normal, and that we are all the same. It doesn't matter what your ethnic identity is. That everything is in the past, we should forget about the past and everything that happened. And we should make some steps forward and bring us together. We cannot live if we are not together (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

During the interviews it seemed as if all the teachers were positive to, and that they wanted an increase in inter-ethnic communication and co-operation in Stolac. Some of the participants expressed a wish for the two schools to be joined in the future

I hope that the next step the NDC will do is to bring us closer in the next months, and years. I hope that eventually in maybe 4-5 years that our schools can become one school (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

Amina expressed the views of most participants when she said:

The NDC does a very good job. It brings people together, and this is the most important thing (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

Olja stressed that the *most* important thing the NDC does is actually bringing the teachers together. According to her it makes it easier for the participants to follow up their plans when the NDC bring them together, provide protection, and help them with the administration. Thus, the teachers' emphasis on "the importance of being brought together" kept occurring in all the interviews (Olja, 2008 [interview with author]).

When considering these quotes from the participants, it seems as if they support inter-ethnic interaction. When the NDC arranges inter-ethnic meetings, they gladly participate. The question that comes to mind, however, is why do the teachers not initiate meetings with one another, considering that they find these meetings to be beneficial and highly important?

5.4 The contradiction

What people *do not* do can be just as good an indicator of their attitudes and social relations as what they do, or what they *say* they do. As previously discussed, the

teachers claimed to have “nothing against” people with a different ethnic identity from themselves before participating in the dialogue seminars. Still, they seemed to have significantly much more contact with people who shared their ethnic affiliation than those who did not. Remember the previously quote from Goran where he said:

(...) I have 200 Croat friends, and maybe three, four or five Muslim friends. Everybody is like that. Croats keeping friends Croats, Muslims, Muslims (...) (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

The lack of contact with people from the other ethnic category does not seem to have improved much after attending the seminars. This can indicate that the participants’ attitudes towards “the other” are not as moderate as it may seem. However, another possible explanation is that there may be some structures in the society in Stolac that limit the establishment of, and involvement in ethnic relations.

5.4.1 “We don’t have the opportunity to meet”

Even though Amir said: “*Now after the seminars of course we communicate*” (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]), the other teachers talked about the lack of interaction between them. Goran expressed that the teachers from Stolac had not met each other many times after the seminars in Lillehammer.

It has now been five months since we went to Norway. We Croats have only been working together with the Muslims three or four times after this seminar. I therefore think that it is questionable if the joint plans we have made will be put into life (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

In this quote Goran indicates that he thinks it is doubtful that joint plans the participants have created in the seminars will be put into life, since they *have not met* each other frequently after the seminar in Lillehammer. It seems as if it is necessary for the NDC Mostar to initiate interaction between the teachers. Another example of this can be found in the following quotes from the interview with Amina, where she talks about the opportunities she has had to meet the Catholic participants after the seminars.

Amina: We don’t have that many opportunities to get together, sit together and share our opinions.

Elisabeth: Do you wish you could have more opportunities to do that?

Amina: Yes (...) I always talk about that in the seminars, that I wish that we could have more opportunities to meet (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

As previously mentioned most of the teachers share this wish for more “opportunities to get together”, however, none of them seem to actively initiate such interaction through arranging more meetings or other social inter-ethnic encounters. It does not seem to occur to them that they have the power to arrange meetings with one another without help from the NDC. The teachers’ lack of “possibilities to meet” can therefore be considered contradicting, since it doesn’t seem as if they are actively trying to meet “the others”. In the next part of the analysis I will try to provide some possible answers to why there is an absence of contact between the participants, even though they apparently want more interaction.

5.5 Is ethnic segregation “the way things are done”?

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) is famous for his attempts to understand the individual’s strategic choices. He launched several theories explaining how all people are subject to structures over which they have no control. These structures can influence how people view and orient themselves in the world. Bourdieu uses the concept “doxa” on “*taken for granted knowledge*” in a society. Doxa is part of the structures that influences the establishment of a cosmological and political order. One example of such knowledge is the creation of boundaries that defines age groups. People use rites or symbols to signify age-limit. In this way the continuum of age is divided into discontinuous segments that are socially symbolised through rites, clothes, cosmetics and other items. Age then, which is something continuous and biological, becomes discontinuous and ordered through social structures. If one is to view Stolac society in the light of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, it is possible to suggest that ethnic segregation in Stolac has become a “taken for granted knowledge” of how this society is to be organised. Maybe the ethnic segregation “*goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned*” (Bourdieu, 1977: 166). This taken for granted

knowledge may further be directing how people are supposed to interact with someone who has a different ethnic identity (Bourdieu, 1977: 164-167; Eriksen, 2003: 82-83).

The idea of structures influencing how individuals think and behave can be illustrated further by Richard Jenkins' (2004) concept of "institutions". According to him, there are institutions or established patterns of practice, which have the force as the right or wrong way to do things. These patterns influence the way individuals act and make decisions. If an individual's actions deviate from the institutionalised routine, others may sanction him or her. According to Jenkins collective identities are institutionalised, and can be seen as "*ways of being*" or "*the way things are done*" (Jenkins, 2004: 22-23, 133-134). This means that ethnic identities are institutionalised and expressed in certain ways. It is possible that a low level of contact and support characterises ethnic relations in Stolac because this is "the way things are done" in this society. Moreover, the ethnic segregation and the lack of inter-ethnic contact may have become institutionalised. Thus, if most people confirm these institutions by not engaging in inter-ethnic interaction with "the others" (because this is the way things are done), the ethnic segregation in Stolac could be further maintained and strengthened by the "confirming actions". This topic will be attended to later in the analysis chapter. I will then be explained how social pressure may maintain the institutions and influence ethnic relations.

In chapter three the historical context of BiH was presented. This gave some answers to why it was possible for the seemingly peaceful multicultural country to become known for its ethnic segregation. Now it is time to find more possible explanations for why a peaceful multi-ethnic society like Stolac could become segregated. In the next sections several factors that may influence ethnic relations in Stolac will be explained.

5.6 The lasting effects of inflicted violence

"Inflicting violence on plural societies constructs the ethnic group in "hard" terms, and creates the image of solidarity in a way that did not (and does not) necessarily exist: an (enforced) solidarity based on a negative of fear and threats rather than on a positive (or organic) one of commonality and sharing"(Gagnon, 2004: 27-28).

Violence can create solidarity and group belonging that did not necessarily exist previously. As mentioned earlier, during the war persecution and violence became peoples' personal experiences. Individual fear often turns into hatred for the enemy- "the other". Insecurity and fear can therefore make it difficult for friends and neighbours to maintain their relationships during a social conflict (Bringa, 2002: 212, 217). Amir explained that ethnic relations in Stolac changed dramatically during the war. Friends often found themselves fighting on "opposite sides". When the war was over people blamed each other for what happened.

During the war [ethnic relations] changed when your friends were fighting on "the opposite side". It is difficult when you try to unite again because people will always try to blame each other now for what happened or what they did (...) Today it's difficult for people with different ethnic identities to have a good relationship. Children for example look towards the other side to see what's different instead of seeing what they have in common (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

In the aftermath of violent conflicts, people have a tendency to think of "the others" the same way they did during the conflict. Violence produces experiences that are stored in a society's collective memory, even when it is not articulated. It is represented by the former dead, former loss and suffering. This collective memory can be used to justify a new ideology of violence. The ethnic segregation in Stolac can have been influenced and strengthened by memories of violence. When people feel fear and insecurity due to such memories this can limit and prevent inter-ethnic contact (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004: 304-305; Schmidt & Schröder, 2001: 8-9).

5.6.1 Fear and security threats

When ethnic identity is perceived to be under threat it becomes more important to people (Eriksen, 2002: 76). During the interviews Goran expressed some thoughts that may indicate that Croats in Stolac feel that they are under threat¹⁷.

We are now below 1% of people in Serb Republic. Practically all Croats live in the federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They live in isolated places like Herzegovina, or in a part of the middle of Bosnia. We have our three cantons, and we have our governments in the cantons. These cantons have their own education, police... Practically we have three small states in BiH. This gives us some security for our way of life, our language, our culture. It's good, but things can change. We are very small people in BiH. Every day people go from BiH to Croatia. They move permanently. So every year the population of Croats in BiH becomes smaller. If this continues approximately 15-20 years from now we may become an ethnic minority in BiH. Now Bosnia has three and a half million people, and 400.000 are Croats (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

If the majority of the Croats in Stolac share the opinions Goran expresses in this quote, it is possible that the ethnic segregation in Stolac is strengthened because Croats feel that they are under threat. Goran says that the way the government works today is a “security for our way of life”. However, he does add “but things can change”. This statement is followed by a description of how small the Croat population is in BiH at the moment. It seems as if he is worried that Croats will lose their influence and integrity in BiH. His worries for the survival of “their way of life” are in correspondence with attitudes that encourage in-group out-group dichotomisation (Bringa, 2002: 212; Halpern & Weinstein, 2004: 305-316). If Goran sees the out-group as a threat, this can have an impact on the way he behaves towards members of the out-group. It is possible to assume that Goran supports inter-ethnic interaction at a personal level since, as will be described later in this chapter, he has established a multi-ethnic basketball team. However, if he is afraid of his own group's security, this may influence his behaviour and make him act in accordance with norms or institutions supporting inter-ethnic segregation, even if he may not

¹⁷ Assuming that it is possible to generalise Goran's thoughts to represent the opinions of other Croats in Stolac as well.

support them himself. This will particularly be the case if it is assumed that individuals have to conform to these norms in order to receive protection from their in-group. This can mean that Goran may be acting in ways that support the ethnic segregation because he does not want to jeopardise his membership in, and protection from the in-group.

It has now been explained that Goran may be affected by the in-group/out-group dichotomisation that seems to be apparent in Stolac. Since it is possible that all the teachers are affected by mechanisms such as these, a further explanation of the nature of in-groups and out-groups will be given in the next section.

5.7 The possible effects of in- and out-group memberships

In times of conflict, individuals seem to develop strong group memberships. When people fear that their groups' security is under threat from an "out-group", they often become motivated to withdraw into safe "in-groups" or "we-groups". This means that if Catholics in Stolac feel that they are under threat, the fear may increase the importance that they put on their ethnic identity and feelings of group belonging may also increase.

In-groups that are based on ethnic affiliation are appealing since membership to these groups is a birthright, and protection and loyalty from other members is usually granted (Bringa, 2002: 212). An in-group is formed when individuals contrast themselves towards others. These "others" are excluded individuals who, from the in-groups perspective, are members of out-groups. Differences between in-groups and out-groups are often exaggerated. The out-group members are often dehumanised, and stereotyped, while the in-group members see themselves as just and humane. Moreover, individuals of the out-group are often no longer seen as individuals, but instead as representatives of the group they represent (Bringa, 2002: 212; Halpern & Weinstein, 2004: 305-316). Once people have started viewing and relating to each other this way it is challenging to reverse the process. The only way to move out of

this in-group out-group mentality is actually engagement with “the other” (Stover & Weinstein, 2004a: 339).

As already explained ethnic belonging can sometimes be made decisive for how, and with whom people can interact. It seems like there are in-group and out-groups in Stolac where memberships are based on ethnic affiliation. The in-group/out-group memberships seem to be relevant in most domains of life in Stolac. In the next section it will be explained how social norms can serve to strengthen and maintain the in-group/out-group dichotomisation.

5.7.1 Conforming to norms

When there is a tendency for strong in-group/out-group dichotomisation in a society, like in Stolac, social norms addressing how members should act towards “the others” also tend to develop. A “*social norm*” can be defined as: “*a generally accepted way of thinking, feeling or behaving that is perceived as the right or proper thing to do*” (Turner, 1991: 3). Social norms prescribe the appropriate, expected or valued behaviour and conduct in matters that are seen to be relevant. Even though social norms are properties of a culture, they are often experienced as being part of an external reality (Turner, 1991: 3). According to Tajfel (1982) conformity to in-group norms is one of the distinguishing characteristics of inter-group behaviour as a contrast to inter-personal behaviour. This conformity is of high relevance to inter-group relations, particularly when groups are in conflict, because it gives the members a sense of security, familiarity and belonging. Members of the in-group are encouraged to have specific behaviours and attitudes towards the out-group (Fisher, 1990: 68-69). Individuals often conform to attitudes or norms they don’t agree with because they want to gain acceptance from their in-group and at the same time avoid rejection and hostility. It is not uncommon that people are more concerned about how the group will react to certain behaviour, than on the content of the action itself (Turner, 1991:37-38). It has already been explained that people in Stolac seem to relate to one another according to in-group/out-group memberships. During the

interviews the teachers explained that there are social norms in Stolac that influence individuals' behaviour. Amir explained that there is a collective awareness in Stolac, which is *forcing* everyone to adapt to certain norms. This collective awareness influences the way people relate to people with a different ethnic identity.

There is a collective awareness that is taking over. People are losing their individuality. They are falling under the influence of this collective awareness, and this basically influences how you see the other side. People just join in, and then they lose their individuality and they don't think for themselves (...). If you say hello to someone in the street, they may not say hello back. Even if you personally don't have a problem with "the others" the entire collective community is in a way forcing you to adapt to their norms (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Amir says that people "just join in" to this collective awareness, and they start acting in ways that the entire collective community aspire. There is evidence to suggest that there are social norms in Stolac that are influencing individuals' behaviour towards in-group and out-group members. Furthermore, this behaviour may serve to maintain and strengthen the institutionalisation of ethnic segregation as "the way things are done". Regardless if such institutions exists in Stolac or not the question still remains if the teachers' absence of initiating contact with "the other" participants may be influenced by social norms? Is, like Amir said, the collective community forcing people to adapt to their norms?

5.8 Pressure in Stolac society

In Stolac people who engage in different types of inter-ethnic relations, like for example inter-ethnic love relationships, are often subject to inter- and intra-group pressure. Amina mentioned that love-relationships between Croats and Bosniaks are not approved of in Stolac. Thus, not many people choose to be in such relationships.

In Stolac we have so many couples. The Bosniak girls meet the Croat boys. But it's very specific. People don't approve of these relationships. I think that in general the ethnic groups don't approve of it (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

During the interviews the participants gave several examples of how social pressure can affect individuals who break norms regarding inter-ethnic interaction. According to Amina most people in Stolac know that the public opinion towards inter-ethnic love relationships is that they should not be established, but as the story goes, some Bosniaks and Croats do fall in love with one another and decide to be together. This can have unforeseen consequences. Amir gave an example of a woman who, according to him, lost her job because she was dating a man with a different ethnic identity.

Amir: There was a young primary school teacher, a Croat, who was dating a guy with a Bosniak background. She was working under the Croat curriculum. She was fired after one year. It is believed that she was fired because of her relationship with this guy.

Elisabeth: Is it legal to fire people on these grounds?

Amir: It is not legal, but there are no human rights mechanisms here. They are not working properly yet. So basically the entire community decided this, so that's the way it happened in the end (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

Given that the main argument for the teacher being fired was based on her relationship with the Bosniak man, then this indicates that she was sanctioned (in the form of getting fired) because she broke a social norm regarding inter-ethnic love affairs. Moreover, this could also mean that acting contrary to the ethnic segregation may generate consequences affecting parts of individuals' lives originally not related to the "crime" committed.

Love relationships are not the only kind of ethnic relations that can lead to heavy sanctions. In 2000 Goran established a basketball team with Bosniak and Croat team players. The team had a prosperous progression. They were champions of the second Bosnian league in 2004. Unfortunately, in spite of the teams' success, all the finances to the team were eventually cut. Goran had a clear opinion of why this happened.

I am the leader of a basketball club in Stolac. In my basketball club there were 7 Croats and 5 Muslims. When the mayor of the city found out he cut all the finances to my team. So if the mayor of the city has these opinions, you can imagine what the smaller people of the city think. (...) He said "in your club I don't want to see any kind of people except Croats". So he was very concrete about

it. But also Muslims from the city tell my Muslim players, my Bosniaks “Oh you play for Croat basketball club, you are traitors”. So they have problems, I have problems. This is the picture of Stolac now (...) Anybody who wants to change things in Stolac are in opposition (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

As Goran explained, the mayor tried to pressure Goran into having an “all Croat” team, by cutting the finances if the team stayed multi-ethnic. The mayor personally told him that only Croats were welcome in the club. When considering this scenario, there is evidence to suggest that the mayor was uncomfortable with Bosniaks and Croats interacting, this is probably behind his lack of support for inter-ethnic sport activities. It is also possible that he preferred to spend financial resources on Croats only, instead of sharing them with Bosniaks. Maybe this was grounded in an image of Bosniaks as members of the “out-group”, and the Croats as members of his “in-group”? One can only speculate on which reasons the mayor had to cut these finances. However, his willingness to do it does indicate that he was unwilling to support inter-ethnic interaction. Goran also addressed other forms of social pressure he and his team players faced.

(...)[For the last] 2 years we have had very big problems with financing the club because of [unclear] from the Mayor of the city. It is a very big problem. We were champions of the second Bosnian basketball league in 2004. But then, when we moved our team to play away matches we have had many kind of troubles because the team has half of Croats half of Muslims. We went to Uborski, Uborski is a town with 100% Croats. And when the announcer said the names of our players people screamed. When we played in Sarajevo, and the announcer said the Croat [names] then we had a similar situation again. So it is very hard (Goran, 2008 [interview with author]).

In the previous quote Goran indicates that the members on his team also experienced sanctions and pressure from other domains in society than the political. The Bosniak team players were subject to intra-group pressure by other Bosniaks. They were told that playing for a Croat basketball club was a traitorous act. Both the Bosniaks and the Croats suffered from group-pressure when they were playing in towns where Croats or Bosniaks were in majority. If, for example, the team was playing in towns where Muslims were in majority like Sarajevo, people where “screaming” when the players’ names were called out, most likely because they were playing in a multi-

ethnic team. This kind of screaming can be interpreted as group pressure because usually during a sport event, “screaming” is a gesture that expresses discontent with someone or something. The players were therefore subject to negative, disapproving attitudes expressed by the audience, simply because they were playing in a multi-ethnic team. One of the many unfortunate aspects of the social and political sanctions towards the basketball team is that Stolac is not a large town and it has limited economic resources. The local government can therefore not afford supporting two teams in every sport category. Amir told me that unless people start supporting the inter-ethnic teams, they might end up with none.

It is difficult in Stolac to organise sports teams where both ethnicities are present. Politics get involved. If you have a football team that has a Croatian name, the Bosniaks will be reluctant to play in it. And it is the same way with the Croat players if a club has a Muslim name. Two teams for Stolac is too much because it is a small town. Stolac does not have enough money to finance two teams neither does Mostar. If they would have two teams they would eventually end up with no teams because they wouldn't have enough finances (Amir, 2008 [interview with author]).

It has now been illustrated that norms, social pressure and sanctions may constrain and limit the formations of ethnic relations in Stolac. It has also been explained how politicians, like the mayor, can have a direct impact on maintaining the ethnic segregation. Since politicians are in a unique position to influence society, politics is a dimension that cannot go unnoticed when it comes to ethnic relations in Stolac. In the empirical material for this thesis, as well as in most of the contemporary literature on BiH, politics is seen as a crucial influencing factor to the ethnic segregation of BiH. In the next section it will be explained how attitudes and political decisions at the median- and macro-level may influence ethnic relations in Stolac.

5.9 The political aspect of the ethnic segregation

“Everything in our community has something to do with politics” (Amina, 2008 [interview with author]).

Politicians can influence ethnic relations in many ways. There have been incidents where politicians in BiH encouraged refugees and displaced people not to move back to their pre-war homes, because they wanted to keep areas ethnically segregated (Belloni, 2001). Previously, it has also been explained how some politicians tried to remain in power by invoking fear of “the other”, in an attempt to make people vote according to “ethnic lines” during the election in 1990 (Bowman, 1996:146-147). Kurt Bassuener (2008), a senior associate in the Democratization Policy Council, confirms that most politicians do what they can to maintain and deepen the ethnic divide because their political survival depends on it. He further argues that:

“The Dayton system makes division politically profitable, and not only that – easy” (Bassuener, 2008 [email interview with author]).

The current state structure in BiH does have a direct impact on ethnic relations. After the establishment of The Dayton Accords, politics and ethnic identity became closely intervened. In a briefing from the Democratization Policy Council that was published on February 21st 2008, it is argued that the government in BiH is controlled by elites that gained power in the 1990s. This elite continues to rule almost all aspects of life in the country. The Dayton system works in a way that makes the politicians not need to win the votes of anyone except “their voters”. Therefore, politicians do not focus on areas of interest that transcend the ethnic divide. The political elite fear for their positions. Therefore they are not interested in dissolving the ethnic segregation, because this is what their political power is based on (Belloni, 2001; Democratization Policy Council, 2008: 3,5,12). When I was in BiH, I got in contact with Tore I. Lindseth, who works as an international judge at The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. Lindseth explained that according to him it seems as if the politicians in BiH focus more on promoting the culture, language and identity of their own ethnicity than on inter-ethnic interaction.

The attitude of the politicians are closely connected to what they believe will gain their party and their personal political life. During this post-war period the nationalistic tendencies leading towards disintegration are becoming even stronger. From this follows that politicians from the biggest parties

more often focus on how to promote the culture, language and identity of their own ethnicity than on inter-ethnic interaction (Lindseth, 2008 [email interview with author]).

What Lindseth says is in accordance with Bassuener's arguments. Lindseth indicates that politicians in BiH mainly make decisions that will benefit their political party. Since ethnic segregation functions to support the current politicians' power, it is not hard to imagine that they may be reluctant to support inter-ethnic co-operation and relations.

5.9.1 Representing the people?

There is reason to believe that people in BiH feel a lack of power to influence local and national politics. In the previously mentioned report "Silent Majority Speaks", 56,9% of the people in the research reported that they were not interested in politics. Nine in ten claimed that the public sector is corrupt (ORI, 2007: section 4:25, section 7: 46). People do not seem to engage in politics beyond voting because they do not believe in politicians. The relationship between citizens and politicians is therefore characterised by disengagement and not involvement (section 1:3). However, people still expect the governments and institutions to solve people's problems. They rarely look for solutions within themselves (section 3: 14). It has been argued that the Dayton system has diminished the citizens' capacity to affect political processes and decisions. The High Representative (HR) has the power to remove any politicians in BiH that is fostering "the poison of division" or obstructing the Dayton implementation. This power granted to the HR has been necessary in order to assure the Dayton Accords, however, it has equally made political power more alien and inaccessible to the population of BiH. As already mentioned, people feel that they do not have much influence on the political system, and since the international community is somehow "overlooking" the political structures in BiH, there is a lack of local incentives for holding politicians accountable for their actions (Belloni, 2001). The citizens' lack of belief in their ability to influence politics, together with their expectations for the government to solve people's problems, may contribute to the low level of individual attempts to diminish the ethnic segregation.

5.9.2 “Two schools under one roof”

I asked Lindseth what his impression of the politicians’ views on ethnic segregation of schools was. He answered that he believes the segregation is justified on the claims that this upholds people’s rights to maintain their own faith, culture and language.

I my opinion it is obvious that politicians in BiH, at all levels, are aware of the ethnic segregation. The Helsinki Committee's 2007 human rights report is well known by the politicians, in which the Committee reprimanded Bosnia's schools for their blatant divisiveness. It said „blatant segregation and apartheid“ reign in many classrooms, with divisions running along ethnic and religious lines. The claims refer mainly to the phenomenon of „two schools under one roof“. There are as many as 54 such schools in the Federation, where children of different nationalities and religious backgrounds go to the same establishment but are taught different curricula by different teachers. They learn nothing about each other, though this is justified by claims, among others by politicians, that this upholds people's fundamental human rights to maintain their own culture, language and faith. This topic is from time to time focused on by the mass media, and in such way publicly known (Lindseth, 2008 [email interview with author]).

Lindseth’s point of view is strengthened by findings in Per Hugaas’ (2006) master’s thesis. Hugaas interviewed the mayor of Stolac, Boskovic, in 2005. In this interview the mayor justified segregation of schools through focusing on upholding people’s rights. He said that it is not important to put the pupils in the same classes, but to give them the same opportunities. In other words, Boskovic did not object to the ethnic segregation of the Stolac High School. However, as Lindseth says, all politicians are aware of the report by the Assembly of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (AHCHRBiH), where it clearly states that these divided schools are *not positive* for the development of universal democratic values in BiH. In the report it is also stated that politicians have misinterpreted “The Framework Law on Elementary and Secondary Education”. This law was meant to give returnees’ children the opportunity to “*attend classes of the so-called “national group of teaching subjects” according to curricula and syllabi of their choice, whereas other teaching subjects will be taught according to local curricula*” (AHCHRBiH, 2007). Politicians in BiH interpreted this as a support for establishing the “two schools under one roof” practice, which the Stolac High School is clearly administrated after. In the “two schools under one roof” children are not being

thought in the same classrooms. Instead they are separated based on ethnic and religious affiliation to one of the constituent peoples. In 54 schools the entire curricula and syllabus is taught in the Croatian language for Croatian students and in the Bosnian language¹⁸ for Bosniak students. In addition to this the teachers do not have any physical contact, and classes are held in different shifts and in opposite floors of the buildings. This means that the children are prevented from learning about and socialising with children with a different ethnic identity (AHCHRBiH, 2007).

5.9.3 General opinions about ethnic segregation in Stolac

It may seem as if Boskovic's attitudes towards the segregated schools are supported by large parts of the population. Lindseth believes that most of the citizens have nothing against ethnic segregation.

My impression is, also based on the results of the latest elections, that most of the citizens are supporting or have nothing against ethnic segregation, that is, if they belong to the majority community in their region. After the war and as a result of ethnic cleansing and the mistrust between the ethnicities that was created by the war, most of the regions are now predominated by one of the ethnicities. One element is also that, even though BiH according to the constitution is a secular state, the politicians' work hand in glove with the religious authorities. Thus religion is becoming increasingly omnipresent in each and every segment of people's live, which in this country may not encourage objections to segregation. Having in mind that your ethnicity mainly is defined by your confession (Lindseth, 2008 [email interview with author]).

In this quote Lindseth bases his answer on the latest election, where peoples' votes indicated that they have nothing against or support ethnic segregation. Bassuener was asked if he believed that people support the ethnic segregation in BiH. He said there is research indicating that the majority of the Bosnian population want the ethnic-segregation to perish.

¹⁸ The Croatian and the Bosnian languages are so similar that they can be categorized as dialects.

If you take a look at the UNDP's "The Silent Majority Speaks" survey, (...) the upshot you will see is that the general population is less divided than the political leadership's rhetoric would have one - and them - believe. Most people KNOW they are being manipulated and cheated/robbed. BUT – since BiH remains a traumatised society, it remains easy to hit the fear nerves. AND, on top of that, there is little social trust, and few examples to point to of bottom-up initiated change. So there are a lot of people who have common ground, but they think they are in the minority when in actuality they are in the majority. A vast disaggregated and non-self-identified constituency. Crystallising that is the hard part. But it will never come from the established elite (Bassuener, 2008 [email interview with author]).

This quote indicates that the political leadership want the population to believe that the majority of Bosnians support the ethnic segregation, even though they don't. The moderate majority's inaction in relation to changing the situation (by for example commanding a less ethnicity based constitution and more support for inter-ethnic co-operation and interaction) may, as previously explained, be triggered by the belief that they are in minority which means they may feel that they have little power to change the situation (ORI, 2007).

It should be added that these facts weaken the theory, which suggested that ethnic segregation may have become a "common knowledge" in BiH and that it therefore *"goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned"*. The majority may not openly show that they question the ethnic segregation. However, if they do not personally support it, it must mean that they are questioning it in their minds. Ethnic segregation is thereby not "taken for granted". However, the politicians' control over ethnic relations in BiH in general, and in Stolac in particular, may be taken for granted by the population. Moreover, since citizens feel disconnected from the political domain, and since they do not hold the politicians accountable for their actions, the individuals' lack of influence on political decisions may also have been institutionalised and thus, taken for granted. When the majority fails to act in ways that weakens ethnic segregation, and instead choose to conform the current structures with their actions, they may be re-establishing and strengthening the ethnic segregation as "the way things are done". Thus, the actions of the moderate majority may lead to a further institutionalisation of the ethnic segregation, *even though* they

personally may not want the ethnic segregation to continue (Jenkins, 2004: 22-23,133-134). It is possible that factors that were mentioned previously in this chapter like social pressure, sanctions, institutionalisation of ethnic segregation, individuals' feelings of lack of influence, together with lack of control over the political domain may contribute to the individuals' conforming behaviour towards the ethnic segregation. This may further explain why the "silent majority" fails to act according to their own wishes and beliefs. This also provides some possible answers to why there is an absence of newly initiated social relationships involving the participants from Stolac.

5.9.4 Possibilities for improvements of the dialogue seminars' impact on ethnic relations

In this chapter the dialogue seminars' possible impact on ethnic relations in Stolac has been explored. However, the issue regarding how it may be feasible to improve the impact of dialogue seminars has yet to be addressed. The first question that comes to mind is if the participants themselves have a chance to improve the impact of the dialogue seminars. It does seem as if the teachers have some power to fertilise the grounds for reconciliation, since they can communicate moderate attitudes, and support inter-ethnic interaction in their education. This way they may contribute to the establishment of more moderate attitudes towards "the other" among the students in the Stolac High School. Unfortunately, as was illustrated in this analysis chapter, the social and political structures supporting ethnic segregation are strong in Stolac society. Even though teachers may be role models to the students, children are known to have other role models like politicians and family member as well. If these other role models support ethnic segregation, it is likely that the students could be affected by their attitudes. Therefore, if Stolac society keeps being segregated and dominated by an in-group/out-group dichotomisation it is possible that the teachers' work on tolerant attitudes in their education will not be enough to improve the grounds for reconciliation.

Since individual behaviour that undermines ethnic-segregation, and supports ethnic relations, can lead to sanctions or group pressure, it is understandable that initiating contact with “the others” is not the teachers’ first priority. So what else could the teachers do to try to stretch the impact of the dialogue seminars so the seminars can affect others than those participating? They could encourage the NDC to create more possibilities for interaction for the teachers. If the participants initiate this contact through the NDC, it will look like the initiative comes from the centre. Thereby the participants would not be seen to be breaking the social norms. By initiating contact with “the others” through the NDC then, the participants’ security would be maintained, and they would be more protected from group pressure.

The NDC could encourage the participants to carry out actions setting that could confront the ethnic segregation and prejudices outside the dialogue. If this is difficult due to the possibilities of sanctions, role-plays could be arranged in the dialogue seminars where inter- and intra-group conflict situations involving group pressure could be acted out. This could prepare the participants to handle uncomfortable situations, and it could make them reflect on alternative ways of handling situations. This could generate a spectrum of do-able actions, which again could motivate the teachers to behave in ways that would support inter-ethnic interaction (Nagda, 2006). Another possible consequence of practicing alternative ways of acting towards “the others” in the seminars is that the participants could become more aware of the fact that conforming to the ethnic segregation does not necessarily have to be “the way things are done” in Stolac. If the teachers started implementing alternative do-able actions to uncomfortable situations that involve ethnic interaction, maybe this would increase the likelihood that moderate individuals, who have not participated in the dialogue seminars, would start acting according to their attitudes as well?

However, even though it is possible that the teachers could have an impact on ethnic relations in Stolac by implementing changes in their behaviours towards “the others”, it is incorrect to assume that changes at the individual level naturally improve the foundations for reconciliation in other domains, such as the political (Chigas &

Ganson, 2003:75-76). Instead, as previously explained, the political domain and social pressure often serve to constrain the impact dialogue seminars have on ethnic relations. As has been illustrated in this thesis, social pressure and norms constrain individuals' behaviour in Stolac; it is therefore questionable that individuals at the micro-level will be able to make changes to structures at the median- and macro-level. However, if we consider the fact that the majority of Bosnians want changes to the ethno-politics, there is a great level of potential for them to have an impact on local and national politics, *if* they work together. If the "silent majority" start holding their politicians accountable for their actions, and if they pressure for less ethno-based political platforms, it is possible that this could generate changes to the political environment. Furthermore, if the country would become less based on ethno-politics, it would be easier to establish grounds for co-operation between the ethnic categories and the establishment of fruitful ethnic relations at the micro-level.

There is evidence to suggest that the political domain in Stolac poses great challenges for the possible impact the dialogue seminars have on ethnic relations in this town. The NDCs have recognised the significant impact politicians in BiH have on maintaining the ethnic segregation in the country. The centres try to improve and change the ethno-politics by incorporating more politicians in their seminars and lectures. Since this has not yet led to great improvements of local ethnic relations however, it seems as if stronger measures are needed if political support for ethnic-interaction is to be reached. The problem is that those politicians that support ethnic segregation, and try to spoil ethnic co-operation, are often not willing to join dialogue seminars (Elvir, 2008 [conversation with author]; Cero, 2008 [conversation with author]). Why would they want to co-operate with organisations that are trying to reconcile the ethnic categories, when their political power is dependent on the ethnic segregation?

Since the moderate majority in BiH is "silent", and since people are pressured to conform to the ethnic segregation, it seems as if it's necessary for the international community put more pressure on politicians to support ethnic coexistence and

interaction¹⁹. Reconciliation projects cannot reach their full potential as long as politicians keep spoiling ethnic relations and inter-ethnic co-operation.

¹⁹ For a suggestion of how this can be done see DCP (2008), ORI (2007), Belloni (2001) or Chigas & Ganson (2003).

6. Conclusion

6.1 Revisiting the research questions

As stated, the purpose of this thesis has been to explore the possible impact the dialogue seminars have had ethnic relations. Two research questions were raised:

Have the dialogue seminars organised by the Nansen Dialogue Centres (NDCs) had any perceptible impact on ethnic relations locally, at the level of practices and/or representations - and if so, in which ways?

How can we explain the relative absence of newly initiated inter-ethnic social relationships involving the participants from Stolac taking part in the NDC Mostar dialogue seminars?

This chapter will provide a summary of the answers to the research questions.

6.2 The dialogue seminars' possible impact on ethnic relations

In this thesis it has been illustrated that the dialogue seminars organised by the NDC Mostar have had an impact on ethnic relations in Stolac at some levels. The seminars seem to have created a limited sphere for inter-ethnic interaction for the teachers. As a result the teachers have become “closer”; they have had more contact with teachers from “the other” curriculum than they would usually, and their ability to co-operate has improved. They have also realised that they share joint problems and goals for Stolac High School. It is feasible that the teachers' interaction can be of symbolic value to the students, and maybe to the rest of the Stolac community as well. By being together and working on problems regarding the school, the teachers show that inter-ethnic interaction and co-operation is possible. However, even though the dialogue seminars have had some impact on the participants' relations to the teachers

with a different ethnic identity, the seminars do not seem to have had a significant impact at the level of practices.

6.3 The dialogue seminars' impact on the participants' behaviour towards "the others"

As was explained in the analysis chapter, the teachers seemed to be supportive of inter-ethnic interaction, and they claimed they wanted more contact with "the others". However, they did not seem to initiate this contact themselves. This can indicate that that the dialogue seminars' have not had a significant impact on the participants' *behaviour* towards people with a different ethnic identity. However, given that inter-group contact over time may reduce prejudices and increase openness towards "the other", perhaps the participants from Stolac will initiate more contact with one another when they have progressed further through the dialogue process. With time their relations may improve and strengthen, which may lower the threshold for initiating contact with the other participants. This is supported by findings from the group from Srebrenica. The group from Srebrenica had been involved in dialogue seminars for a longer period of time. They initiated more contact and had developed closer relations with one another than the teachers from Stolac had.

This thesis has given explanations to why there is a lack of contact and interaction between people with different ethnic identities in Stolac. It may seem as if structures in Stolac society constrain and limit individuals' (including the teachers) behaviours. It has been argued that the ethnic segregation in Stolac can have been institutionalised as "the way things are done", which means that people may act in ways that conform to the ethnic segregation because social norms and local knowledge is "directing" people to act that way. As was explained in the analysis chapter, these social norms together with intra- and inter-group pressure may maintain the ethnic segregation, and prevent the formation of ethnic relations in most domains of life. Since acting in ways that break these norms (like for example getting romantically involved with someone from a different ethnic category) can jeopardise individuals' memberships

in the in-group, and also lead to group-pressure or sanctions, it is possible to assume that social norms serve to limit the impact the dialogue seminars have on ethnic relations. Even though the seminars *may* have improved the participants' attitudes towards "the others", it is likely that their behaviours are severely constrained and adjusted through social norms, group-pressure and other structures that maintain ethnic segregation as "the way things are done".

This thesis has also provided evidence to suggest that the political and social contexts in Bosnia-Herzegovina have an effect on people's behaviour towards others with a different ethnic identity. Since politicians at the national and local level seem to support the ethnic segregation, and work against inter-ethnic co-operation, this may serve to maintain the in-group/ out-group dichotomisation, and thus the institutionalisation of ethnic segregation in Stolac society. It is highly likely that the ethno-politics affect individual behaviour. Since most people in BiH feel like they have no direct influence on the political domain, and since they are pressured and encouraged to act in ways that conform the ethnic segregation, this may result in the "moderate majority's" inaction when it comes to acting in ways that reflect their attitudes towards ethnic segregation.

6.4 Final remarks

At the onset of this thesis it was stated that the aim was to explore what impact the dialogue seminars organised by the NDC Mostar may have in fertilising the grounds for peace building and reconciliation in Stolac. Learning about the impact different reconciliation methods have on segregated categories of people is important if one wants to improve these methods' contribution to reconciliation. This thesis has generated some knowledge to this field by investigating how structures in Stolac society may limit the impact of the dialogue seminars. The dialogue seminars' impact seems to be dependent on if social and political structures in the segregated society are fertile for reconciliation. Thus, it seems that reconciliation of ethnic categories will only take hold in divided communities like Stolac if the social and political

contexts allow for and promote inter-ethnic contact (Stover and Weinstein, 2004b: 324). Following the assumption presented in this thesis that the political domain influences social life and ethnic segregation in Stolac, it can be suggested that if politicians would support and facilitate inter-ethnic interaction, the moderate majority's (including the teachers from Stolac) willingness to act in ways that does not conform and strengthen ethnic segregation could increase.

It should be stressed that even though the dialogue seminars' impact on ethnic relations seems to be low at the moment, it does not mean that dialogue as a method for reconciliation lacks potential; neither does it mean that it cannot have a great impact on ethnic relations in Stolac in the future. As was illustrated with the participants from Srebrenica, dialogue seminars can provide an opportunity for people from different parts of a conflict to get together and develop close friendships. This can mean that the dialogue seminars do have some potential for improving the grounds for reconciliation in Stolac in the future.

Due to the scope of this thesis, and the limitations of the empirical data, many questions regarding the dialogue seminars' impact on ethnic relations in Stolac are left unanswered. Future research could be directed at replicating the present study with more informants. Similar research studies could also be conducted in other geographic areas where dialogue seminars are implemented in an attempt to reconcile ethnically segregated categories. This could generate more knowledge of how dialogue seminars affect individuals and societies in general. There is also a need to investigate if it is possible to somehow limit the impact political spoilers and group-pressure have in reducing the dialogue-seminars' potential for reconciliation.

As for the dialogue seminars' impact on ethnic relations in Stolac, it could be interesting to explore whether the students have experienced any changes in their curriculum, or in the attitudes and behaviours of the teachers at the Stolac High School after the teachers joined the dialogue seminars. It would be equally interesting to interview more participants from Srebrenica and Stolac in order to further

investigate how and why the seminars seem to have affected these groups in different ways.

Since segregated communities carry the potential for future conflicts, there is a need for more research on the limitations and possible improvements of reconciliation measures like dialogue seminars. I hope that this thesis can inspire others to further explore the possible impact dialogue seminars can have on segregated communities.

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Amir. Male, Bosniak, teacher. *Interview with author, with translator.* 11.01.2008.

Goran. Male, Croat, teacher. *Interview with Author.* 10.01.2008.

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²⁰ Transcriptions, notes or emails are available upon request.
